AQUA Knight

BY THE ACCLAIMED CREATOR OF BATTLE ANGEL ALITA!

Story and Art by

Yukito Kishiro

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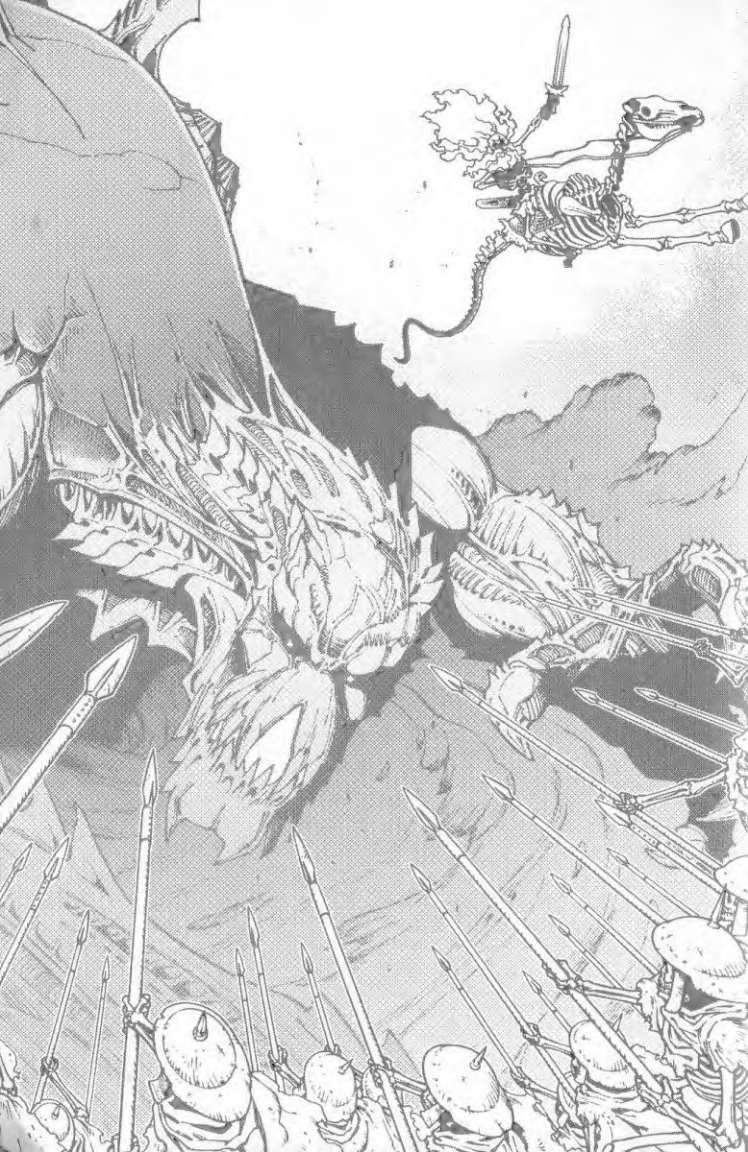

AQUA Knight

Volume 3

Story & Art by
Yukito Kishiro

AQUA KNIGHT Vol. 3

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THE TALE THUS FAR...

On a remote island on a mystical aqueous world, a naive young boy named Ashika lived a tranquil life with his father Arrabarus the lighthouse keeper, and Niselle—a mysterious sphere of light that Ashika takes to be his mother.

One day, the boy discovered an unusual sunken treasure—a high-tech suit of underwater armor! But what was even more unusual was the beautiful female warrior trapped inside!

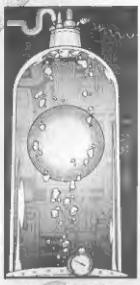
In return for saving her life, Aqua Knight Ruliya offered to grant Ashika his heart's desire. To her surprise, he wished to become an Aqua Knight, just like her!

But before Ashika could begin his duties as Ruliya's squire, both were sorely tested. Ashika attempted to prove his mettle by charging a voracious legendary water dragon, and Arrabarus challenged Ruliya to a duel in full battle armor to prove herself worthy to be his son's mentor.

Things really got out of hand, however, with the arrival of nefarious inventor Alcantara and the bizarre crew of his air/watership: Zykey, Zycrow, and Gygro. When the smoke cleared, Arrabarus had been escorted to the underworld; Ruliya received the gift of a demon-conjuring blade named "Muertogara"; and Alcantara kidnapped hapless Ashika and the precious light....

Now Ruliya is in hot pursuit to rescue her squire, and Ashika is about to make his second escape attempt...

ASHIKA


NISELLE

RULIYA

ALCANTARA

ZYKEY

ZYCROW

GYGRO

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ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT ONE

GUARDIAN GOD
MAGNA PRIMERO
IN THE DISTANT PAST, MARMUNDO WAS IN A STATE OF GREAT TURMOIL--UNTIL *MAGNA PRIMERO* DESCENDED TO RID THE WORLD OF EVIL BY GATHERING TWELVE DISCIPLES WHO WOULD BECOME THE FIRST AQUA KNIGHTS. *MAGNA PRIMERO* MEANS THE 'FIRST GREAT ONE.' HIS TRUE NAME REMAINS A MYSTERY.

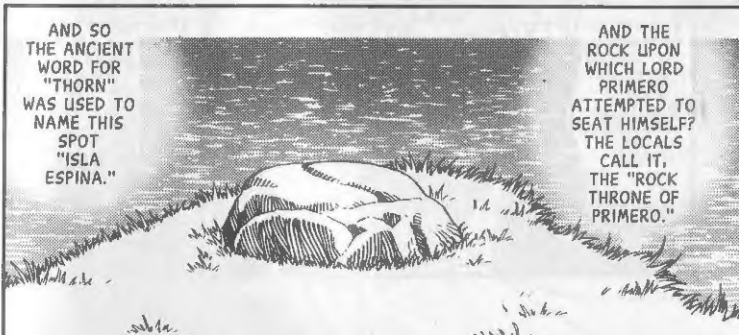
SCENE ONE: ORIGIN

LONG, LONG AGO, MAGNA PRIMERO AND HIS DISCIPLES...
...JOURNEYED TO THIS UNKNOWN ISLAND.
"NOW, WHAT SHALL I NAME THIS PLACE?"
≷OOF≷
LORD PRIMERO STRODE TO THE TOP OF A PROMONTORY AND BEGAN TO SEAT HIMSELF UPON A ROCK.
"YEEE-OWW!"

"WHAT AILS YOU, LORD PRIMERO?"
"I KNOW NOT. MY REAR END PAINS ME."
"OH! HOLD STILL, LORD, PRIMERO."

"THERE! I GOT IT!"
"SO THAT *THORN* IS THE CAUSE OF THE PAIN IN MY REAR."

"FROM THIS DAY FORWARD...
"THIS PLACE SHALL BE CALLED *'THORN ISLAND.'*"


AND SO THE ANCIENT WORD FOR "THORN" WAS USED TO NAME THIS SPOT "ISLA ESPINA."
AND THE ROCK UPON WHICH LORD PRIMERO ATTEMPTED TO SEAT HIMSELF? THE LOCALS CALL IT, THE "ROCK THRONE OF PRIMERO."

SCENE TWO: THE TIME FOR ESCAPE

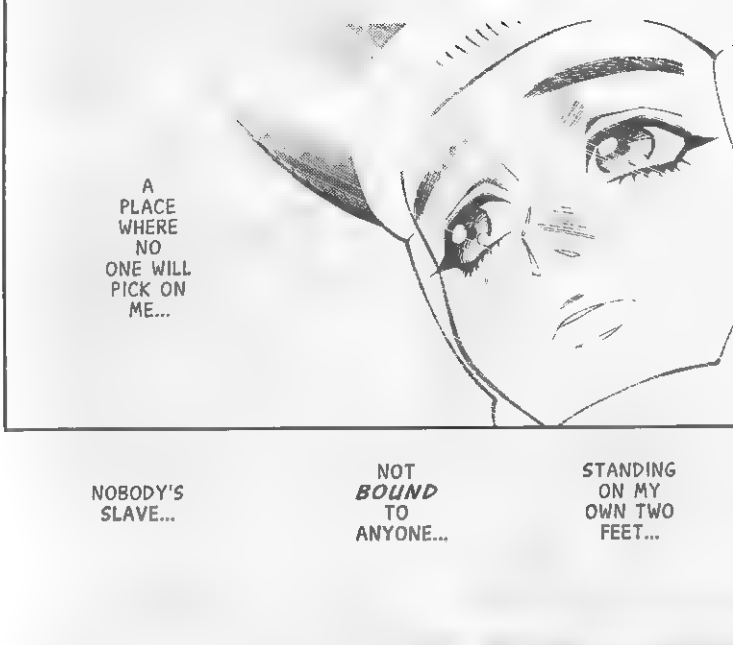
IT'S BEEN A MONTH SINCE WANDERING GENIUS *ALCANTARA* STOLE THE LIGHT SPHERE FROM LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND.
MOBILE FORTRESS ZYFORT HAS STOPPED FOR SUPPLIES ON ISLA ESPINA, IN THE RONJIN TERRITORY OF ENORME.
HMM... NORMALLY WE WOULD BE AT MY BASE OF OPERATIONS-- *ZYBASE*-- BY NOW...
THIS IS FAR, *FAR* FROM *IDEAL*.
:GASP:
UM... IS THE MASTER ANGRY?

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, TYCROW?
JING
THE GREAT ALCANTARA NEVER CLOUDS HIS HEART WITH ANGER.
WAHA HAHAHA!
I JUST HAVE A STRONG URGE TO KICK YOU. THAT'S ALL!
GYAH!
JUST YOU WAIT...
KYA HAHA!
DON'T LAUGH AT ME!
BUT WE WEREN'T--
AIEE EEEE EEE!
I CAN'T TAKE THIS ANYMORE... ≒SOB≒

FINALLY ZYCROW HEADED INTO TOWN FOR SUPPLIES.
KUK-EKEH!
FWp
FWp
WE MEET AGAIN, TRAVELER.
EHH !?
IT... IT'S YOU !?
ZYKEY, I'LL BE A WHILE. LOOK AFTER THINGS
YES, SIR.
ALCANTARA ACCOMPANIED THE VISITOR TO THE PROMONTORY TO CONVERSE.

SO MANY CHORES!
....
POP
POP
POP
POP
SKITTA
BINK
BINK
BINK
SKITTA
BA
PING
I CAN RUN AWAY NOW...!
PWP
OH!
MISS ZYKEY...

TUG TUG
NO OOO OOO OOO OO!
IF YOU DON'T RUN AWAY WITH ME *RIGHT NOW*, I'M GOING TO MAKE FECES!
SK WUP
WARN ME NEXT TIME.
AHH!
?? HELLO!
MISS ZYKEY! RUN AWAY WITH ME!
ALL RIGHT-- AFTER I FINISH THE LAUNDRY.
I LIKE MISS ZYKEY A *LOT!*
I WANT TO TAKE YOU SOMEPLACE WHERE NO ONE WILL PICK ON YOU!
WHAT ABOUT YOUR MOTHER ?
THEY DON'T PICK ON HER, SO SHE'LL BE *FINE!*
GRW OOO OON!
NO, YOU CAN'T YOU STAND OUT TOO MUCH, GYGRO!
RUN AWAY... ?

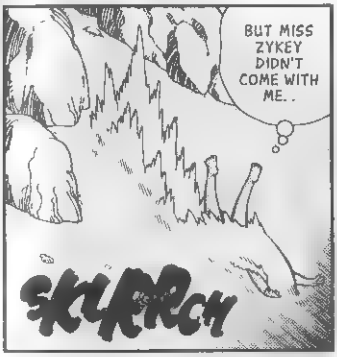

A PLACE WHERE NO ONE WILL PICK ON ME...
NOBODY'S SLAVE...
NOT *BOUND* TO ANYONE...
STANDING ON MY OWN TWO FEET...
FAR AWAY...!

I'M SORRY, ASHIKA...
BUT IT IS MY *FATE* TO STAY BY MASTER AL'S SIDE-- FOR *LIFE*...

MISS ZYKEY...
THANK YOU. BUT YOU GO AHEAD AND RUN AWAY WITHOUT ME.
GWOM
BUT WHY...?
HURRY, BEFORE MASTER AL RETURNS!
WHY WON'T YOU COME...?
I'M ASKING YOU SO NICELY...
I HATE YOU, MISS ZYKEY!

SCENE THREE: THE GREAT ESCAPE

LIKE FECES FLOATING IN THE OCEAN!
FREEDOM!
ASHIKA THOUGHT THAT WAS *PRETTY POETIC*...


BUT MISS ZYKEY DIDN'T COME WITH ME..
SKURRCH

WHAT IS *"FATE"* ?
ADULT WORDS CONFUSE ME.

IF *I* WAS ALL GROWN UP...
GRRR RRR

...I COULD HAVE MADE *BIGGER* FECES! THEN MISS ZYKEY WOULD HAVE COME WITH ME...!
SO SAD...
TEN-YEAR-OLD ASHIKA'S MIND NEVER VENTURED FAR FROM THE SCATO-LOGICAL

SCENE FOUR: THE ROCK THRONE OF PRIMERO

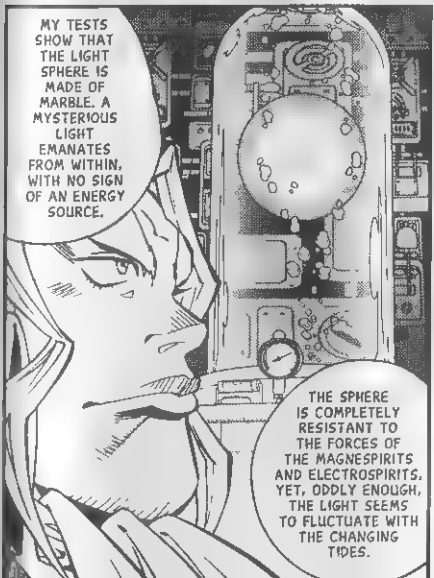
IT'S ALL GOOD
I HAVE TRANS-CENDED HUMAN KNOW-LEDGE
I AM, AFTER ALL, "LA GUIA DE LA MANO DORADA"

HMPH! THAT'S *NOTHING.* *NO ONE* CAN SURPASS *ME,* THE GREAT ALCANTARA, IN DEPTH OF KNOWLEDGE ONE DAY I WILL EXPOSE HIS DECEIT!
BUT, FOR NOW I MUST FIND OUT WHAT HE'S AFTER!
A YEAR AGO, BEFORE WE SET FOOT IN THIS BARBARIC LAND, YOU TOLD ME THAT...
IN DISTANT DAYS, A MAN BROUGHT BACK FROM THE UNDER-WORLD A *'SPHERE OF LIFE'*
AND THAT FROM IT, THE *"ELIXIR OF LIFE"* CAN BE DIS-TILLED.
I NOW HAVE THE GLOWING SPHERE IN MY SHIP-- THE *KEY* INGREDIENT!
IT'S ALL GOOD.
USE THE SPHERE AS YOU WILL

WHAT IS HE AFTER !?
I AM NOT WELL VERSED IN ASSESSING ANOTHER'S DESIRES

I AGREE THAT THE SPHERE HAS SOME MYSTERIOUS HEALING ASPECTS...
BUT IT IS FAR FROM CAPABLE OF GRANTING IMMORTALITY!

HE MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE A PLAN...
...BUT THE ONLY PATH OPEN TO ME IS TO FORGE AHEAD!


MY TESTS SHOW THAT THE LIGHT SPHERE IS MADE OF MARBLE. A MYSTERIOUS LIGHT EMANATES FROM WITHIN, WITH NO SIGN OF AN ENERGY SOURCE.
THE SPHERE IS COMPLETELY RESISTANT TO THE FORCES OF THE MAGNESPIRITS AND ELECTROSPIRITS. YET, ODDLY ENOUGH, THE LIGHT SEEMS TO FLUCTUATE WITH THE CHANGING TIDES.

THE SECRET OF THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.
..REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

IT'S ALL GOOD
I WILL TELL YOU ONE THING..

"FOR A LONE INDIVIDUAL TO ACCOMPLISH A MIRACLE...
"...THAT WHICH IS ON TOP MUST BE ON THE BOTTOM...
"...AND THAT WHICH IS ON THE BOTTOM MUST BE ON THE TOP."
OR SOME-THING LIKE THAT.
ZMP

HA HA HA HA!
DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME WITH IT!
ALCHEMY'S PATH IS MUDDY AT BEST
MOST JUST SQUANDER THEIR LIVES ON IT
....
AND WHO ARE YOU...!?
I SENSED MOVE-MENT IN THE ESPIRITU.
OO OOO OOH!
HE'S HUGE...

MY, MY!
BRRK BRRK
A LONG LIFE HAS ITS BENEFITS!
HA HA HA!
DON'T RUN OFF.
LET ME SHAKE YOUR HAND!
AN HONOR!
HSS SS!
HSSS

HA HA HA HA!
VANISHED !?
FOREIGNER, YOU SHOULD CHOOSE BETTER FRIENDS--
FRIENDS OF *THIS* WORLD!
THAT WAS MOST LIKELY A SERVANT OF THE GODS... *NOT* THE SORT YOU'D WANT TO KNOW.
I DO NOT BELIEVE IN YOUR *GODS!*
THE *ONE* AND *ONLY* GOD IS THE GOD OF GEOMETRY, *GEOMETRON!*
NO!
"NO," INDEED! NOW THEN, ALCHEMIST FROM AFAR--
YOU SPOKE OF IMMORTALITY?
PAT PAT

IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO GROW OLD AND DIE...
...WHY NOT RESEARCH A MEANS FOR A CATERPILLAR *NOT* TO TURN INTO A BUTTER-FLY?

WHAT !?
THAT LIGHT SPHERE WILL TELL YOU NOTHING.
IT'S LIKE MOONLIGHT... AN AFTER-GLOW OF SORTS.
JUST WHO IS THIS OLD MAN !?
SUCH CHARISMA! SUCH PRESENCE! EVEN I FIND MYSELF IN HIS THRALL...!
BUT IN THE END, THIS IS BENEATH MY CONCERN!
HAHA HAHAHA HAHA!

ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT TWO

SCENE FIVE: ASHIKA MEETS DOG

FEH.
TH-THIS IS--
--SOME KIND OF DARE!
I'LL SHOW YOU!
PLOP
YAY!
BOOM
GRR
SHAKE, BOY?
PRETTY GOOD.
HEH
NOT HALF BAD.
HA
AND WITHOUT A WORD EXCHANGED, A NEW FRIENDSHIP WAS BORN!

SCENE SIX:
ASHIKA MEETS PUMPKIN

PUMPKIN

--SOME KIND OF SEA URCHIN!

I *SAID*, IT'S A *PUMP-KIN*!

ASHIKA'S DEDUCTIVE PROCESS

SEA URCHIN

(ECHINONEUS CYCLOSTOMUS)

FOUND NEAR CORAL REEFS ON THE SEA FLOOR, THESE DEEP-RED TO LIGHT-BEIGE CREATURES ARE THREE CENTIMETERS IN DIAMETER

AIEE EEE WHAT AN *AMAZING* DIS-COVERY.

I'M GOING TO HAVE TO DO MY HAPPY DANCE NOW!

UFF UFF HUFF

WHAT-EVER

SCENE SEVEN: ASHIKA MEETS VILLAGERS

HMM?
ARF ARF
FUB UB
AIN'T THAT THE PREACHER'S DOG, BACH!?
SURE LOOKS LIKE IT!
BUT THAT THERE DOG NEVER GETS FRIENDLY WITH NOBODY! BUT LOOK AT IT PLAYIN' WITH THAT STRANGE KID ON THAT WEIRD BALL .
HE MUST BE A SERVANT O' GOD OR SOME-THIN'!
TMP
I'LL TELL THE OTHERS!

TAKEN FOR A SERVANT OF GOD, ASHIKA WAS INSTANTLY SURROUNDED BY VILLAGERS.
MRRMRR MRMMRR

OOOOOOH
PEE PEE!
TWSH TSH
DON'T GET COCKY, KID

WE GIVE THANKS
SO GOOD TO BE ALIVE
WHAT A FESTIVE CHILD!

SO, LORD ASHIKA-- WHAT IS THIS BALL?
I THINK IT'S A URCHIN!

THAT'S NOT COR-RECT
ELDER!

LORD ASHIKA SAID HE FOUND IT IN THE FOREST
WHAT WOULD A SEA URCHIN BE DOING IN THE FOREST!?
THEN WHAT IS IT, ELDER!?
THIS IS AN EGG!
POINK
AN EGG!?
PUMPKIN
WHAT A HUGE EGG!
BUT THE ELDER'S RIGHT--AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS A FOREST URCHIN.
I NEVER WOULDA GUESSED
BUT WHAT KINDA BIRD WOULD LAY SUCH A FAT EGG?
MUST BE A BIRD AS BIG AS A WHALE!
LET'S SEE WHAT KIND OF BIRD'LL HATCH OUTTA IT!
WUB DUB
NO! I WANT TO EAT A GIANT FRIED EGG!
BUT IF WE RAISE IT, MAYBE WE'LL GET A WHALE'S WORTH OF MEAT!
BUT I'M HUNGRY NOW!

AH!
BOOSH
SPLORT
SNIFF!
HEY, LOOK!
WMP
WMP
WMP
AN ANIMAL HATCHED OUTTA THE EGG!
IT'S A DON-KEY!
A DON-KEY!

WAAAAAH!
TIMP TUMP TOOMP
OW!
THAT'S MY LEG!
NO, IT'S MINE!
THIS LOOKS BAD.
THEIR ARMS AND LEGS ARE ALL MIXED UP.
I SUFFER NOT THESE FOOLS.
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
PREACHER!
A DONKEY WAS BORN FROM AN EGG.
...WHICH, AS YOU CAN SEE, CAUSED ALL OUR LIMBS TO GET MIXED UP SO NOW WE'RE STUCK
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT HOLD ON...

SCENE EIGHT: ASHIKA MEETS PREACHER

SNAP
KOOTCHI KOO.
YAHAHA HAHAA! THAT'S MY FOOT!
KOOTCHI KOOTCHI KOO...
EEEK! THAT ONE'S MINE!
THAT IS ONE SMART PREACHER MAN!
ASHIKA MARVELED AT THE PREACHER'S TALENT FOR UNTANGLING PROBLEMS.
I HAVEN'T SEEN YOU BEFORE, CHILD
WHY DON'T YOU STAY AT THE CHURCH TONIGHT?

NAMED AFTER THE GIANT TOWER OF SALT DISCOVERED ON ISLA CENTERAL, THE CHURCH OF SALPILAR IS THE KINGDOM OF ENORME'S OFFICIAL CENTER OF WORSHIP

AIEE EEEE! IT LOOKS LIKE A LIGHT-HOUSE
A LIGHT-HOUSE THAT IS A GOOD ANALOGY
...AS THIS IS A LIGHTHOUSE FOR THE SOUL.
THIS HOUSE OF GOD EXISTS SO THAT THE SOULS OF PEOPLE LOST AT SEA WILL BE GUIDED HOME BY HIS LIGHT.
GOD LIVES IN HERE? WHERE IS HE!?
IN A HIGHER PLACE WHERE PEOPLE CANNOT REACH
BUT HE IS ALWAYS LOOKING DOWN UPON US
LONG AGO, THE GODS TOLD US TO "SPREAD JOY"
AND SO WE COME HERE EVERY DAY TO REPORT WHAT GOOD HAS BEFALLEN US-- AND TO PRAY FOR MORE GOOD ON THE MORROW

THE JOYS OF TODAY.
A GREAT ESCAPE
MADE FRIENDS WITH BACHI.
SAW A DONKEY BORN FROM AN EGG.
ALL IS WELL.
THE JOYS OF TOMORROW.
UH...
KEK-EKEH!
FWAK
ASHI-KAAAA!
ZYKEY, YOU LET THE BRAT ESCAPE!
FIFTY SPANKS FOR YOU!
AAAA-AAAH!
A-A-ASHIKA... LIVE FOR ME, TOO...
WUMP
M-M-MISS ZYKEY...
THINKING OF ZYKEY, ASHIKA WAS UNABLE TO PRAY FOR HIS OWN HAPPINESS ON THE NEXT DAY.

NIGHT
NOW YOU EAT THAT ALL UP AND GROW BIG!
♡ YAAA AAAY!
ASHIKA, DEAR-- WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE WITH US?
WE DON'T HAVE ANY CHILDREN OF OUR OWN, AND I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THAT YOU WERE SENT TO US FROM THE GODS!
RIGHT, HONEY?
YOU'RE RIGHT
THIS VILLAGE IS FULL OF FOOLS WHO TRY TO MAKE THE TOWER BIGGER BY PUTTING FERTILIZER AROUND IT.
BUT THEY ARE ALL GOOD PEOPLE I'M SURE YOU WON'T BE BORED
..... YUM!

SCENE NINE: ASHIKA AND HIS FIRST INNER CONFLICT

IT'S NOT MY FAULT!
IT'S MISS ZYKEY'S FAULT FOR NOT COMING WITH ME!
IF I GO BACK NOW, I'LL GET SPANKED A HUNDRED TIMES!
I CAN'T TAKE THAT!
I DON'T WANT TO GET HURT!
I WANT TO BE FREE!

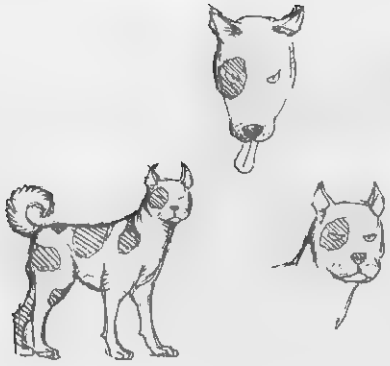
I WANT TO BE...

MORNING.
ASHIKA IS GONE.
SHEEEN
THE FOOD WAS GREAT.
THANK YOU
I SEE...
GOOD LUCK.

I
WANT
TO
BE...

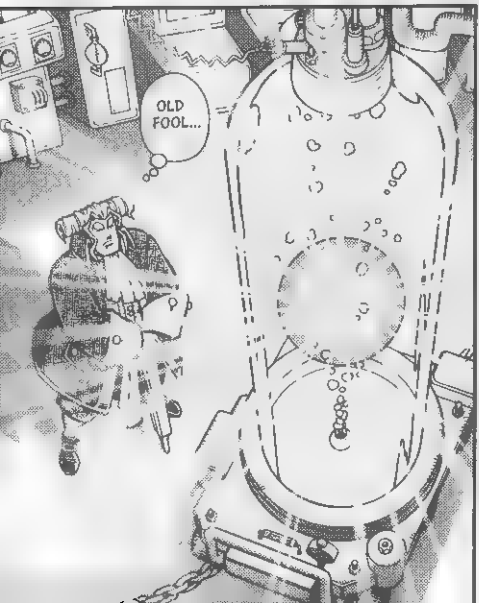
I'M SCARED!
BUT...
I CAN'T BE HAPPY IF I LEAVE MISS ZYKEY BEHIND!
I CANNOT TARRY ANY LONGER!
GYGRO, PULL YOUR ARMS IN!
LAUNCH THE ZYFORT !
BE HAPPY, ASHIKA.
TCH! LUCKY BRAT...
DON'T BE SAD, ZYKEY! IT WAS JUST A LOWLY CREATURE...
A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP AND IT WILL FORGET ALL ABOUT YOU!

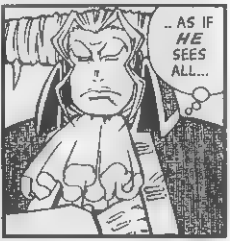
MISS ZYKEY!
KUKEH! THE FOOL CAME BACK! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
ASHIKA! BUT WHY... ?
WHAT !?
LET HIM ABOARD!

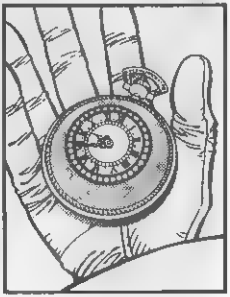


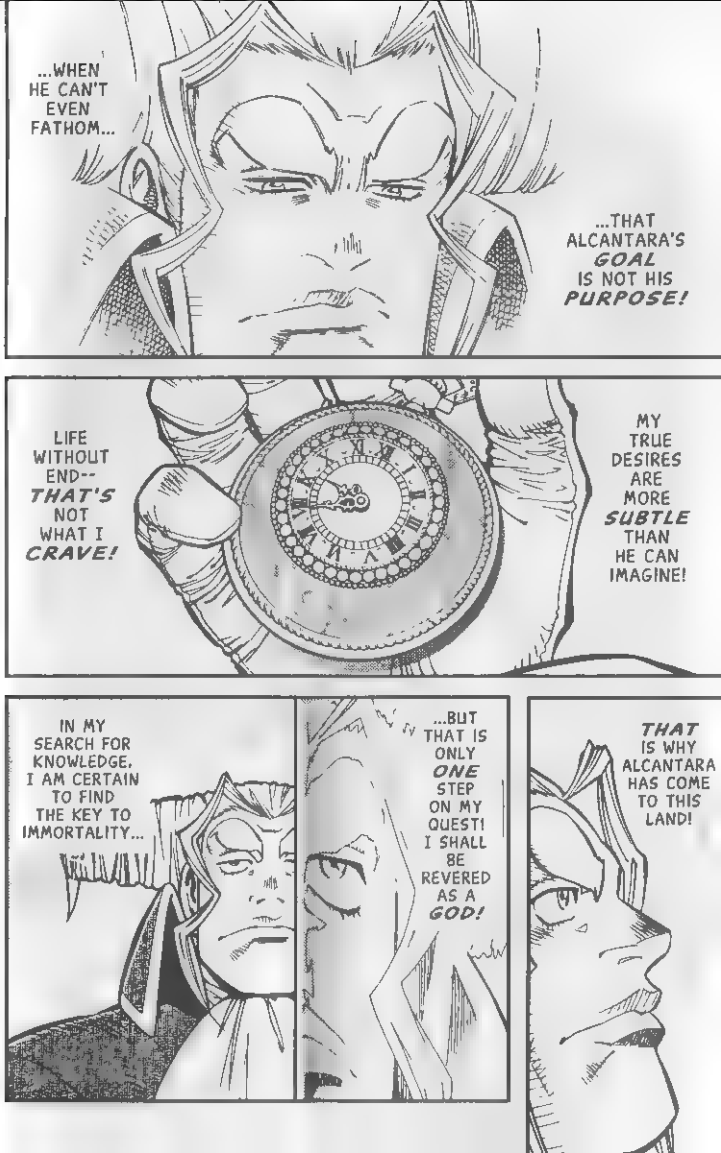
ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT THREE

SCENE TEN: ZYKEY'S SECRET

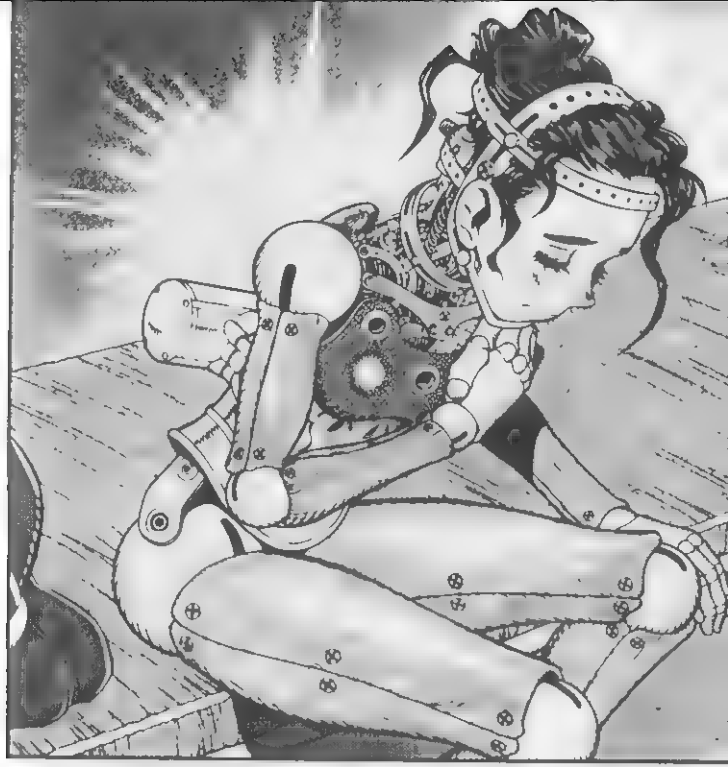




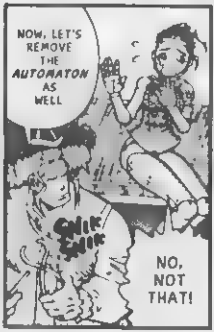



...WHEN HE CAN'T EVEN FATHOM...
...THAT ALCANTARA'S GOAL IS NOT HIS PURPOSE!
LIFE WITHOUT END-- THAT'S NOT WHAT I CRAVE!
MY TRUE DESIRES ARE MORE SUBTLE THAN HE CAN IMAGINE!
IN MY SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE, I AM CERTAIN TO FIND THE KEY TO IMMORTALITY...
...BUT THAT IS ONLY ONE STEP ON MY QUEST! I SHALL BE REVERED AS A GOD!
THAT IS WHY ALCANTARA HAS COME TO THIS LAND!

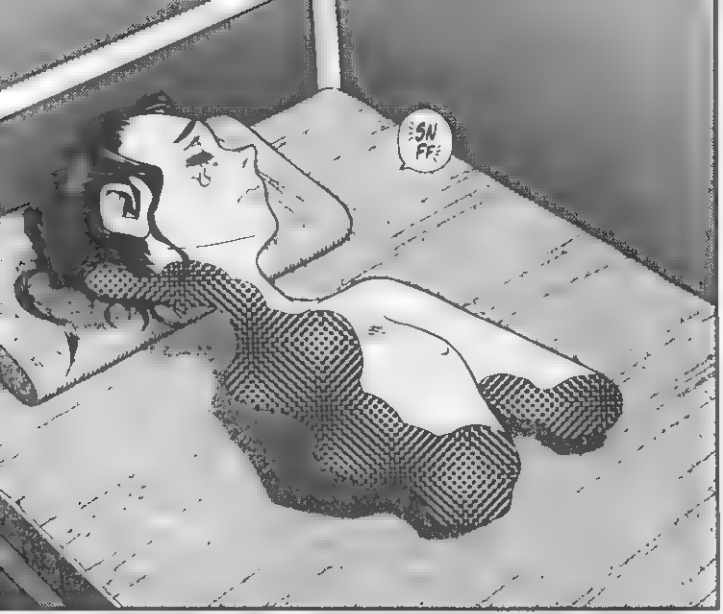
DID YOU SEND FOR US, MASTER AL?
UN NH
YES. BOTH OF YOU-- COME INSIDE
TIME FOR YOUR CHECK-UP, ZYKEY!
REMOVE YOUR CORSET AND LIE DOWN.
WH-WHAT!? BUT ASHIKA IS...
FEH ..
I THINK HE HAS THE RIGHT TO KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU. DON'T YOU AGREE?
?
YES... I SEE.
SNFF

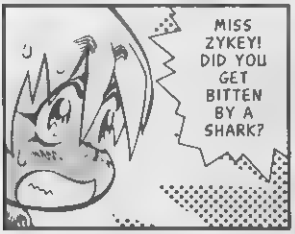


MISS ZYKEY, ARE YOU OKAY!? DOES IT HURT!?
PLEASE! DON'T LOOK AT ME, ASHIKA!


NOW, LET'S REMOVE THE AUTOMATON AS WELL
CHIK CHIK
NO, NOT THAT!

WHAT DID YOU SAY? HMM?
YEEEEEEH!


SNIFF


MISS ZYKEY! DID YOU GET BITTEN BY A SHARK?

IT'S THE NILNIL DISEASE.

INCURABLE. THE BODY IS SLOWLY CONSUMED INTO NOTHINGNESS

AH!
THE SPREAD OF THE DISEASE HAS SLOWED OVER THE LAST MONTH

IT MAY BE DUE TO THE HEALING POWERS OF THE *LIGHT SPHERE.*
STILL, WITHIN TEN YEARS OR SO, ZYKEY'S BODY WILL COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR-- VANISH INTO NON-EXISTENCE, WITHOUT A TRACE.

MISS ZYKEY!

....

BOY, YOU CAST ASIDE YOUR FREEDOM TO RETURN TO THIS SHIP..
YOU HAVE EARNED THE RIGHT TO KNOW *WHY* WE HAVE COME TO THIS LAND SEEKING THE ELIXIR OF LIFE!

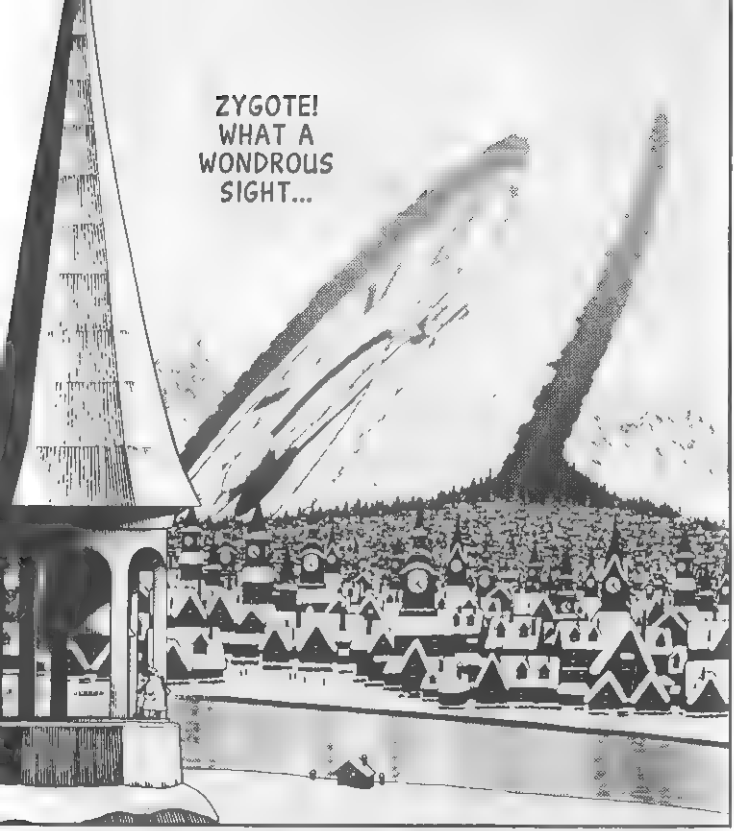
LISTEN WELL TO MY SAD TALE...

THE KINGDOM OF ZYGOTE
YBUR KNOM
THE CAPITAL CITY

SCENE ELEVEN:
1290 Z.C. ZYGOTE

MOTHER!
ALCANTARA
HEIR TO THE MUELLERBERT FAMILY, AGE TEN
AA AH!
TIK TIK TIK
GHA
WHY !?
FCSS
TUP
YOU'RE A DOCTOR! WHY COULDN'T YOU SAVE MOTHER !?

WHAT A PATHETIC CHARADE.
MOTHER'S BODY ISN'T EVEN *IN* THAT COFFIN.
HFFF


ZYGOTE! WHAT A WONDROUS SIGHT...

EVEN IF *MOTHER'S* WATCH HAS STOPPED, THE GREAT SPACE TIMEPIECE *ZYCLOCK* WILL CONTINUE TO RUN...
...AS LONG AS THE GREAT PEOPLE OF ZYGOTE KEEP WORKING.

MOTHER, I AM *PROUD* OF THIS LAND

JWNNG
KANK SPT SPT
ZRRRNG
A.CANTARA'S INVENT ON
BELL RESONANCE
RING-INDUCING UNIT
BON
BON
NNG
SHANNG SHANNG
KLNNNG KLNNNG
GONNG GONNG
BING
PING
I WILL LEARN ALL THERE IS TO LEARN IN THIS LAND OF ZYGOTE...
AND ONE DAY I SHALL CURE THE NILNIL DISEASE!

SCENE TWELVE: YOUNG ALCANTARA'S CHALLENGE

A LETTER FROM AL?
HE WRITES, "I REQUEST A LETTER OF INTRODUCTION TO ALL OF ZYGOTE'S PREMIERE SCIENTISTS SO THAT I MAY LEARN FROM THE BEST "
LAZLOCUBIN!
ALCANTARA'S FATHER FAMOUS FOR HIS WORK IN THE FIELD OF AUTOMATION FOR THE SPACE CLOCK NDUSTRIES
HOW OLD IS HE NOW?
ZZZT ZZZT
TWELVE
ONLY TWELVE! WHO DOES HE THINK HE IS?
ZOT ZAP
NO SURPRISE, THOUGH HE IS OF MY BLOOD, AFTER ALL
ALL RIGHT, I'LL WRITE THAT LETTER FOR HIM
HEE HEE HEE
ALCALONE
ALCANTARA'S GRANDFATHER A HERO WHOSE INVENTIONS AND INNOVAT ONS HAVE MADE ZYGOTE WHAT T S TODAY

1293 7 C
YBUR KNOM UNIVERSITY
I THANK YOU FOR YOUR LECTURE, PROFESSORS
STILL
.. AS A GENIUS, I KNOW WHAT A SCIENTIST NEEDS.
EXPERIENCE OVER KNOWLEDGE, IMAGINATION OVER EXPERIENCE, AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE ABOVE ALL ELSE
BRAT!
I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU ALL .
...WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NILNIL DISEASE?
PSS PSS PST
THERE IS NO SUCH DISEASE IN OUR MEDICAL BOOKS
-KOFF-
THEREFORE, SUCH A DISEASE DOES NOT EXIST!

WHAT !?
MY MOTHER VANISHED RIGHT BEFORE MY EYES!
ARE YOU SURE SHE DIDN'T RUN AWAY WITH ANOTHER MAN?
WHY, YOU SON-NUVA--!
SKRUNK
1295 Z.C.
ZYGO ACADEMY
302ND GREAT SCIENCE CONFERENCE
YOUR BRAINS HAVE ROTTED IN YOUR HEADS!
ALCANTARA, AGE 15.

HAVE YOU NO CURIOSITY? NO COURAGE?
THROW THAT KID OUT!
ALL YOU DO IS RESTATE PROVEN THEORIES-- GLOSSING OVER THE REAL MYSTERIES OF THE WORLD!
IF WE ARE TO EXPLORE SCIENCE..
..WE MUST BRAVE THE WILDS, VENTURE INTO NEW TERRITORIES! YOU CALL YOURSELVES "SCIENTISTS"?!
HOW DARE YOU?!
BOO! BOO!
GET OUTTA HERE!
SO I END
IS OTHIN MORE CAN EARN ERE

SCENE THIRTEEN: LABYRINTH OF KNOWLEDGE

1798 7 C
YBUR DAWN MOUNTAINS
YOUNG MASTER, PLEASE!
ENOUGH, MYCOFF!
SHRAOOOM
IT IS SAID THAT ALL THE KNOWLEDGE EVER RECORDED IN THE HISTORY OF ZYGOTE EXISTS INSIDE THIS "LABYRINTH OF KNOWLEDGE"!
A.CANTARA AGE 18
LEGEND SPEAKS OF A "GUARDIAN OF KNOWLEDGE" WHO LIVES BEHIND THESE GATES!
YES BUT NO ONE WHO HAS VENTURED WITHIN HAS EVER RETURNED!
SO WHAT!?
I HAVE YET TO EVEN GUESS THE CAUSE OF THE NILNIL DISEASE!
FMP
I WILL GO TO ANY LENGTH TO FIND A CLUE TO ITS ETIOLOGY!
GO BACK IF YOU WISH!
YOUNG MASTER!
FWSH

THE WALLS! THE FLOOR! ALL BOOKS!
TRULY A LABYRINTH OF KNOWLEDGE!
OOO OOH
A VAST FEAST READY TO BE DEVOURED! I SHALL MAKE ALL OF THIS PART OF MY BRAIN!
AHHHHH!
THE ALCANTARA SPEED-READING TECHNIQUE!
FLIPSKRIP
AAAH! QUICK SAND NO, QUICK BOOKS!
SHUMM
I SHALL MERELY [redacted] QUICKER THAN I SINK!
TAATAA
AAATAAAH!

HMM? A LIGHT UP AHEAD!
OH, WE HAVE A VISITOR
GRSS TSS
BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THE LAST ONE
ARE YOU THE GUARDIANS OF KNOWLEDGE!?
UFF HFF
THERE IS NO SUCH PERSON
WE ARE ALL CASTAWAYS OF KNOWLEDGE
HEH HEH HEH
AS YOU, TOO, SHALL BE
DO YOU HAVE ANY FOOD?
WE'RE SICK OF EATING BOOKS
LET GO OF ME!
AH, YOUTH
SKRIPPP RRRIPPP
I GIVE HIM THREE DAYS, TOPS

HOW CAN THIS BE!

EACH WORD IS SO WELL CHOSEN.
...YET THEY ALL ADD UP TO *NOTHING!* SPECULATION, WILD THEORIES, DEDUCTIONS WITHOUT PROOF, PASSAGES OF SELF-PRAISE!

IS THIS *TRULY* THE CULMINATION OF THE KINGDOM'S KNOWLEDGE!? COULD THE CREATORS OF THE *GREAT SPACE CLOCK* HAVE BECOME SO *COMPLACENT*...
...THEIR MINDS SO *STUNTED* AND *STAGNANT* !?

SIC
BLAM
ONE WEEK LATER.
AHH! THE YOUNG MASTER HAS RETURNED!
I KNEW AT *THAT* MOMENT...

...THAT I WAS THE *FINEST* GENIUS IN THE HISTORY OF ZYGOTE!
BUT ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE ACHIEVED THE *APEX* OF GREATNESS CAN TRULY KNOW...
...THE *SORROW* THAT FILLED MY *HEART*...

ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT FOUR
ALCANTARA-DES GAED
REPEATING GUN
IN A TIME OF TRADITIONAL FLINTLOCKS, THIS FIREARM ADVANCEMENT HELD MANY SHOTS WITHOUT RELOADING. IT EMPLOYED ELECTRO-

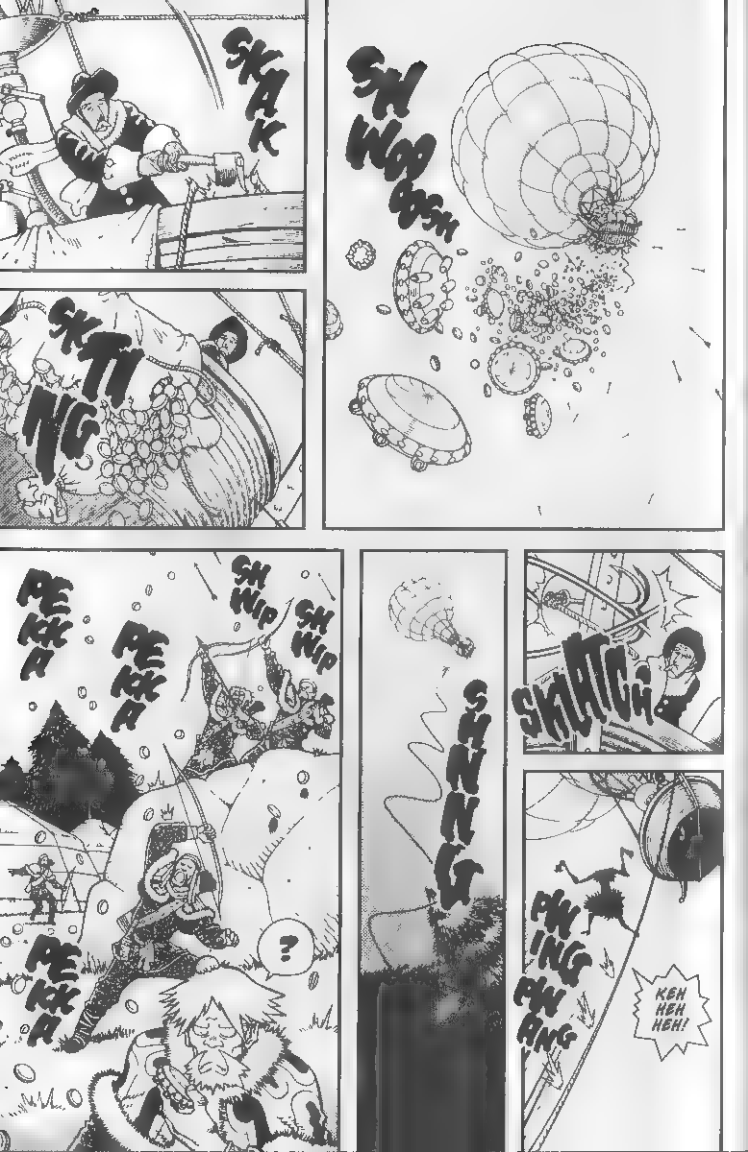
SCENE FOURTEEN: THE CLOCK WAR

1302 Z.C.
OUTBREAK OF THE FIFTH CLOCK WAR
THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE OF THE NOROCK TRIBE BANDED TOGETHER OVER THEIR HATRED OF CLOCKS TO WAGE A LARGE-SCALE BATTLE AGAINST ZYGOTE
SHWIP
SHWIP
SHWIP
DOWN WITH CLOCKS!
WE DON'T NEED TO KNOW THE TIME OF DAY!
RMB RMB
SHOW THOSE BARBARIANS THE POWER OF TECHNOLOGY!
THE ZYGOTE FOUGHT BACK, USING SMALL FIREARMS AND CANNON AGAINST THE NOROCK'S BOWS AND ARROWS
BANG BANG
BOOM
ORDER ABOVE ALL!
BOTH SIDES SUFFERED GREAT LOSSES OF LIFE, AND THE BATTLE SEEMED DESTINED FOR A STALEMATE

ZYGOTE MILITARY HQ
WHY IS THIS HAPPENING!?
WE HAVE *SUPERIOR* FIREPOWER AND NUMBERS..
...YET *STILL* WE SUFFER GREAT LOSSES IN BATTLE!
YES, GENERAL, OUR FORCES ARE STRONGER *BUT*...
...THE OPPOSITION *UNFAIRLY* ATTACKS US DURING OUR SCHEDULED MEAL TIMES AND REST BREAKS
HOW *DARE* THEY ATTACK US AT THE WRONG TIME!
THE *CLOCK* IS OUR BASIC PRINCIPLE. NO MATTER *WHAT* OUR LOSSES, WE WILL *NEVER* BREAK OUR ROUTINE!
GENTLEMEN, SHOW THEM WE REMAIN *COMMITTED* TO ORDER!
YES!
SWAP
HAHAHAHA!
FIW UP
SHSH
WHO DARES !?

I SHALL SHOW YOU HOW TO ACCOM-PLISH A PERFECT VICTORY!
ALCANTARA, AGE 22.
HE'S THE GRANDSON OF THE INVENTOR ALCA LONE.
OH!
THE ONE WHO'S SAID TO HAVE CONQUERED THE LABYRINTH OF KNOW-LEDGE?
YOU HAVE A PLAN?
GENERAL, THIS IS A BATTLE BETWEEN CULTURES.
SUCH A WAR CANNOT BE WON MERELY BY TALLYING LOST LIVES!
BAM
A TRUE VICTORY WILL ENSURE THAT SUCH A WAR NEVER HAPPENS AGAIN!
ALL WE MUST DO IS SHOW THOSE BARBARIANS THE WONDERS OF TECHNOLOGY THAT ZYGOTE HAS TO OFFER!

YOUNG MASTER, WE'RE OVER THE TARGET AREA
EXCEL-LENT PREPARE TO DROP!


SKAK
SHWOOOSH
SKTTING
PEKKA
PEKKA
PEKKA
SHWIP
SHWIP
?
SHNNG
SKRTCH
PWING
PWANG
KEH HEH HEH!

AN INTRU-DER!
TOOF!
YAH!
MY-COFF!
WAAAA AAAAH!
KEH HEH HEH HEH!
SLA AAA AAH!

VERY WELL DONE.
SLL RRP
KEH HEH HEH HEH...
BUT KILLING ME WON'T CHANGE THE FACT THAT YOU'VE LOST THE WAR
KEH ?
LOOK DOWN BELOW!
EEEEEEE!
YHEEHEE!
AAGH!
KLIK
TIGSH
GKGSH
AIEE EEEE EEE!
TIKKA
PING
TEKKA
TOKKA

HELP ME!
SKREKKA
CHEKKA
CLOCK BUGS!
MADE FROM A RUGGED ZYCHROME ALLOY AND, BEST OF ALL
GET OFF OF ME! GET OFF OF ME!
WAK WAK
THE TIME IS 2:03.
KNOW THE TIME NOW!
...ANY UNDUE MOTION, AND THE CLOCK BUG RECITES THE TIME!
KA CHAK
HANDY, IS IT NOT!?
THE TIME IS 2:04.
EEE EEK!
STUPID SUB-CREATURE!
SKRAK
EE EEE EEE EEE EEE EE!
YOU'VE WON, YOUNG MASTER! SIMPLY AMAZING!
BUT OF COURSE!
AND SO THE CLOCK WAR CAME TO AN END!

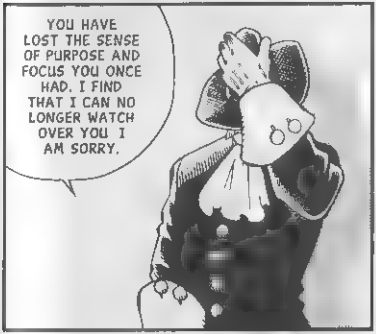
SCENE FIFTEEN: AGE OF CONFUSION

IN THE MORNING, ALCANTARA DEBUNKED THE THEORIES OF THE GREAT SCIENTISTS...
...IN THE AFTERNOON, HE HELD PARTIES AND UNVEILED HIS NEW MUSIC TO THE MASSES
AND AT NIGHT, HE GAMBLED IN BACK-ALLEY CASINOS

AND ALL THE WHILE, HE FOUGHT THREE DUELS A DAY.
THIS AIMLESS LIFESTYLE WENT ON FOR DAYS, MONTHS, YEARS...

YOUNG MASTER, I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE A LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

WHAT'S WRONG, MYCOFF ?
THE YOUNG MASTER HAS *CHANGED* SINCE THE LAST WAR.


YOU HAVE LOST THE SENSE OF PURPOSE AND FOCUS YOU ONCE HAD. I FIND THAT I CAN NO LONGER WATCH OVER YOU I AM SORRY.

KIK

1305 Z.C.
STOP, THIEF!
HFF... UFF...
KEH HEH! THAT WOMAN HAS SOME NICE VALUABLES.
MY, HOW YOU'VE FALLEN.
WHO'S THERE!?
IT IS I.
TOOM
Y-Y-YOU!
TWANG
SPRING

THE ONCE GREAT ASSASSIN, NOW WORKING AS A LOWLY THIEF.
STAY AWAY FROM ME!
SHWOSH
EH? A KNIFE? IS THAT A BRIGHT IDEA?
YOU WISH TO PICK UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF?
IT'S NO GOOD...
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO BEAT THIS MAN!
STOP IT!

DROP THE KNIFE, ZYCROW.
!
WMp
THE INVENTOR ALCANTARA, I PRESUME?
MY NAME IS ZYOWL.
YOUR VICTORY OVER OUR PEOPLE WAS MAGNIFICENT!
THERE WAS NOT A WEAPON IN OUR WORLD THAT COULD HAVE COME CLOSE! THE NOROCK TRIBE NEVER STOOD A CHANCE!
BUT WHEN YOU ROBBED US OF OUR RIGHT TO DIE IN BATTLE, YOU LEFT US WITHOUT WORK, TO LIVE LIKE RATS...
DO YOU CALL THAT AN HONORABLE VICTORY !?

TO LIVE BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE...
...THAT *IS* CORRECT-- FOR ANY LIFE FORM!
ANY LIFE FORM BUT *CIVILIZED* MAN!
I SHALL GIVE YOU A *PURPOSE* TO LIVE FOR!
AS OF TODAY, YOU SHALL BE MY *MINIONS!*

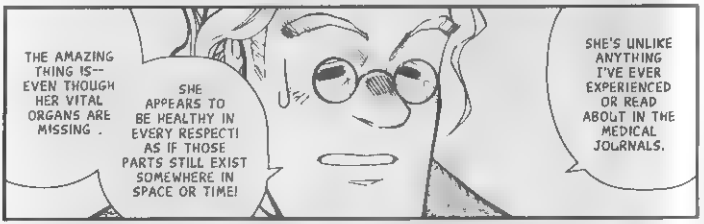
SCENE SIXTEEN: MESSAGE FROM THE PATRIARCH

1310 Z.C.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, AUGUSTUS
YOU'VE BECOME A FINE DOCTOR
YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED A BIT, ALCANTARA!
I WISH TO EXTEND MY CONDOLENCES AT YOUR LOSS.
THANK YOU, GRANDFATHER WAS QUITE OLD
HE WAS A RECLUSE IN THE LAST YEAR OF HIS LIFE, EXISTING ONLY FOR SCIENCE
EVEN I HAD NOT SEEN HIM FOR QUITE SOME TIME.
BUT YOU DIDN'T COME ALL THIS WAY BECAUSE OF GRANDFATHER?
WELL, THE TRUTH IS
THERE'S BEEN A CASE OF THE *MILNIL DISEASE*.

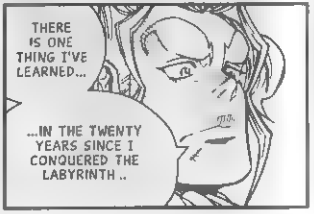
I ACCOMPANIED DR. AUGUSTUS TO VISIT THE PATIENT...
...A SHY YOUNG THING, FULL OF DREAMS.
OH, I'M SO NERVOUS!
THE FAMOUS ALCANTARA--COMING JUST TO SEE ME...
ZYKEY
AS A GIRL, AGE 14.
WHAT'S SHE SO GIDDY ABOUT!?
HER PARENTS WERE COLD, AND FELT ONLY DISGUST FOR THEIR DAUGHTER.
IN THEIR PRESENCE, HER FACE BECAME A MASK, DEVOID OF FEELING.
I COULDN'T HELP BUT THINK THAT I HAD SEEN THAT LOOK BEFORE...

FOOF!

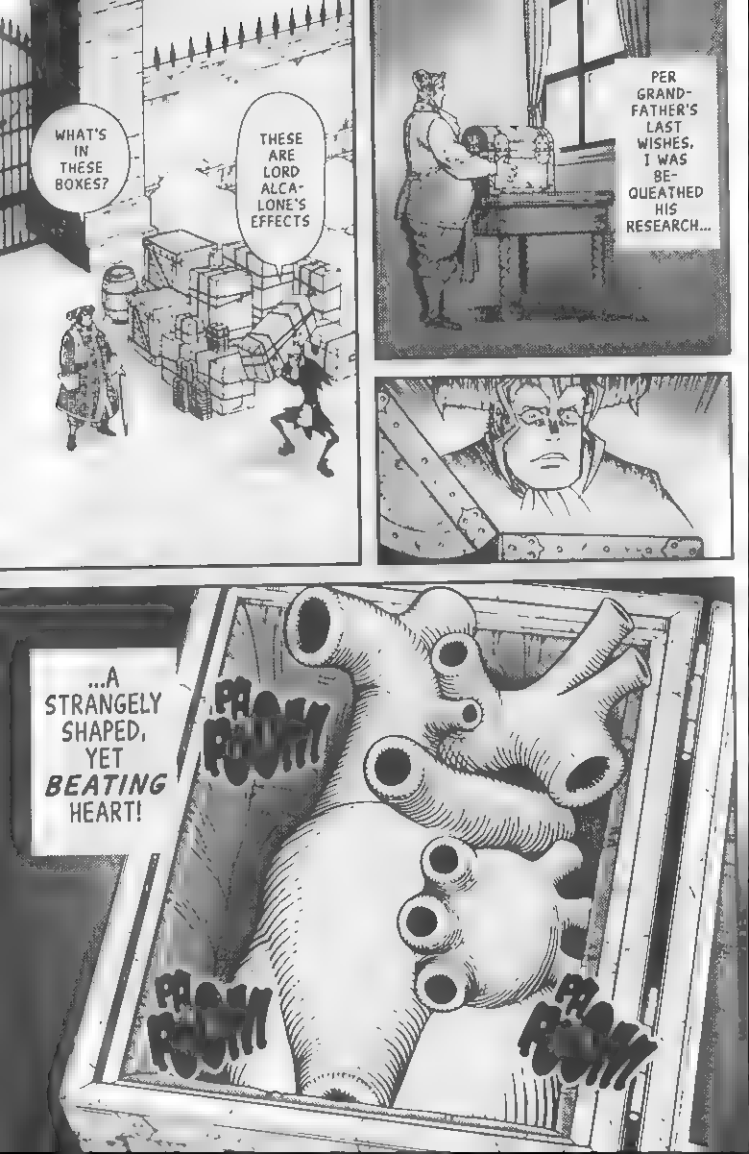
PLEASE! SHE ISN'T A TOY...

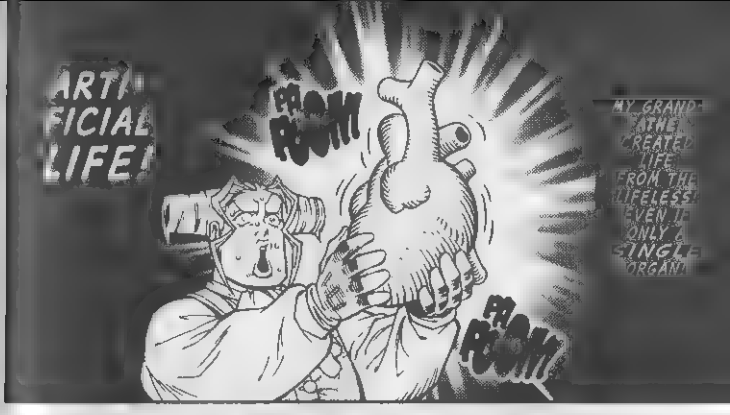

THE AMAZING THING IS-- EVEN THOUGH HER VITAL ORGANS ARE MISSING .
SHE APPEARS TO BE HEALTHY IN EVERY RESPECT! AS IF THOSE PARTS STILL EXIST SOMEWHERE IN SPACE OR TIME!
SHE'S UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER EXPERIENCED OR READ ABOUT IN THE MEDICAL JOURNALS.

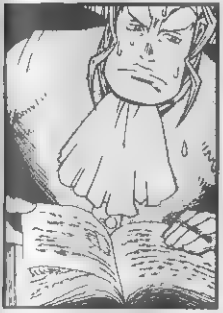
I BROUGHT YOU HERE IN HOPES THAT YOU MIGHT SOLVE THIS MYSTERY, ALCANTARA!

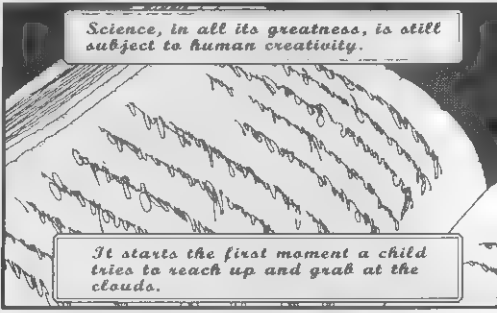

THERE IS ONE THING I'VE LEARNED...
...IN THE TWENTY YEARS SINCE I CONQUERED THE LABYRINTH ..

THERE IS NO CURE FOR THE NILNIL DISEASE!
WHAT DID YOU SAY!?
I CAN'T BELIEVE MY EARS!
WAIT!
I CAN'T HELP WOULD THAT I COULD
EVEN GENIUS HAS ITS LIMITS.


WHAT'S IN THESE BOXES?
THESE ARE LORD ALCA-LONE'S EFFECTS
PER GRAND-FATHER'S LAST WISHES, I WAS BE-QUEATHED HIS RESEARCH...
...A STRANGELY SHAPED, YET *BEATING* HEART!
PA-POOM
PA-POOM
PA-POOM

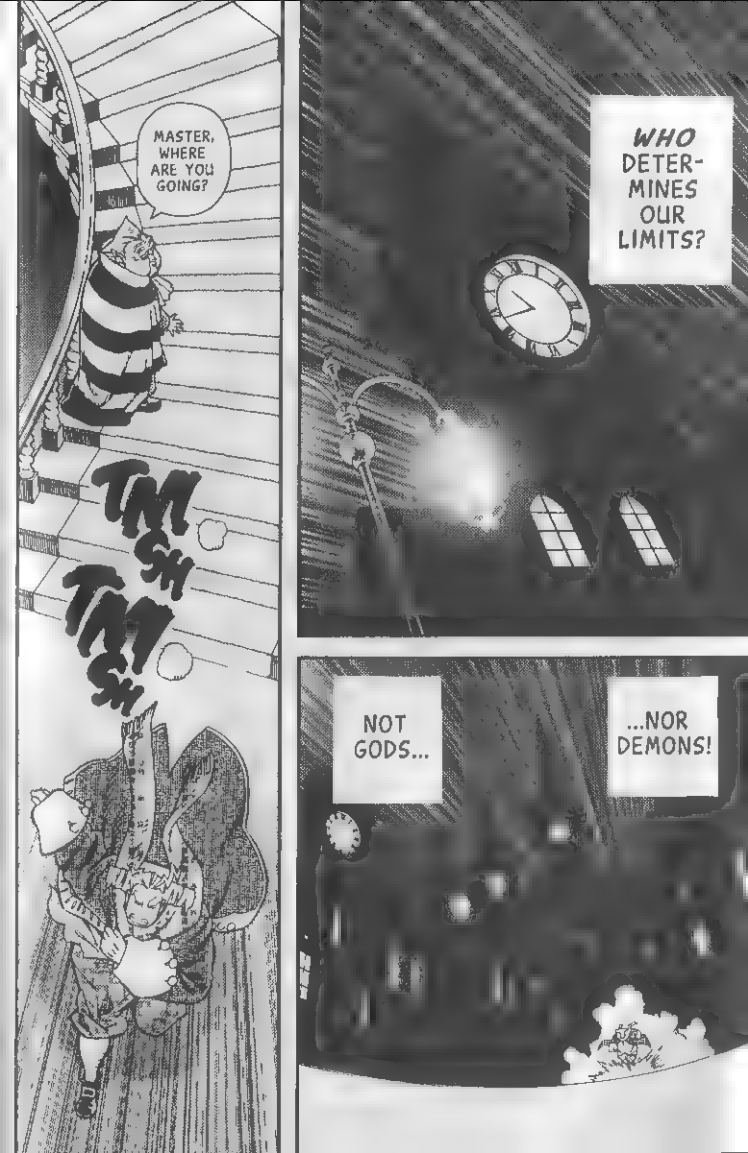

ARTI-
FICIAL
LIFE!
FA-
POOM!!
MY GRAND-FATHER CREATED LIFE FROM THE LIFELESS. EVEN IF ONLY A SINGLE ORGAN.
FA-
POOM!!




Science, in all its greatness, is still subject to human creativity.
It starts the first moment a child tries to reach up and grab at the clouds.

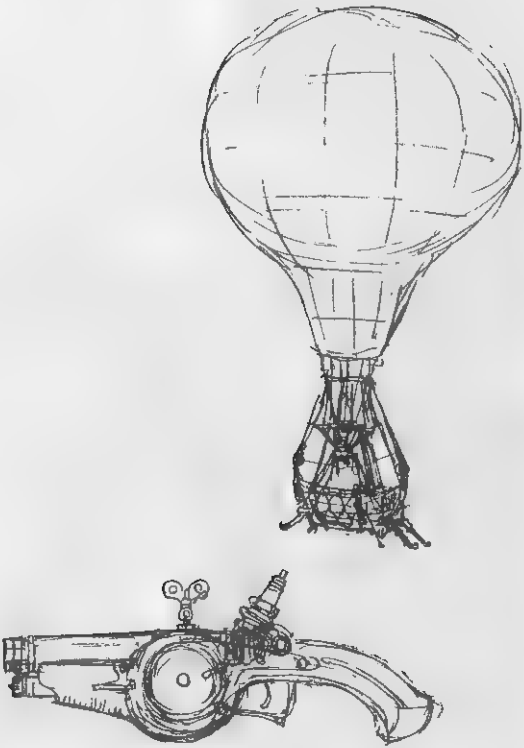
Soon, the child learns that his own hands cannot reach the sky--but his hands are not the limit of his potential.
For the human brain observes, considers, understands, and adapts. Locked within the mind is infinite possibility.

Eventually, our science will allow us to grasp the clouds--and even to fly beyond them.
Then we shall unlock the secrets once thought to be only within the purview of the Gods.
The clouds hang high--but not too high!
If an obstacle stands in our way, it only tells us how high we must go to reach our goal.


MASTER, WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
TMCH
TMCH
WHO DETER-MINES OUR LIMITS?
NOT GODS...
...NOR DEMONS!

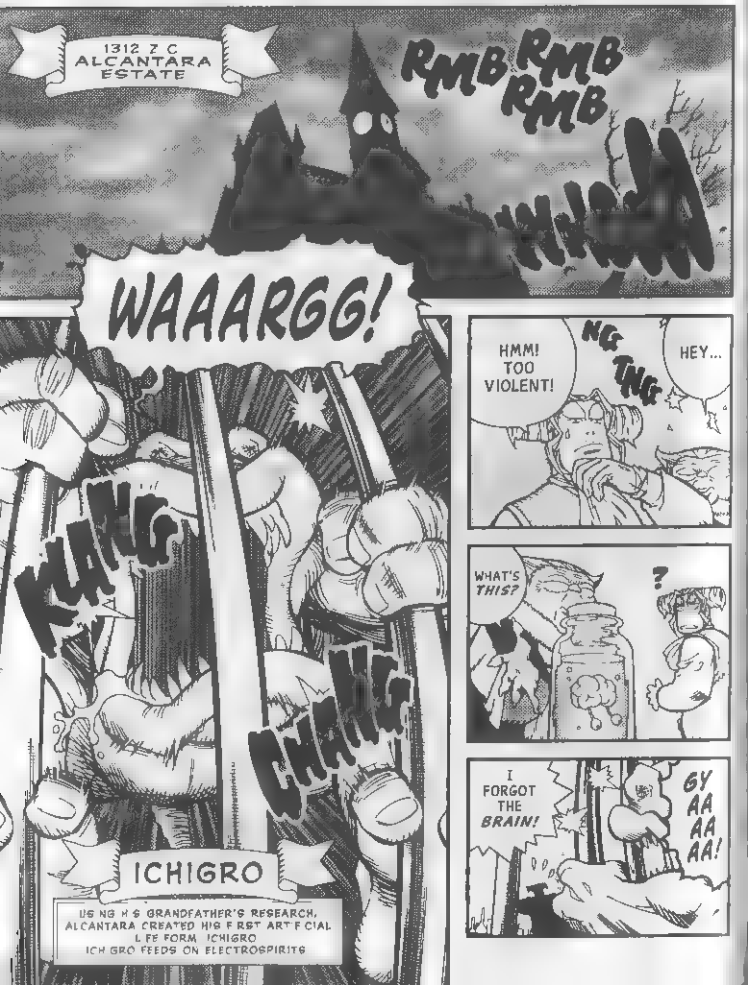
OUR OWN EXCUSES!
OUR SELFISHNESS!
OUR WEAKNESS!

WHY AVE YOU NI LNED !?
YOUNG GIRL!
THISH
THISH
HUFF
UFF
I WAS WRONG!
I WILL FIND A CURE FOR THE NILNIL DISEASE!
WMPH



ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT FIVE

SCENE SEVENTEEN:
A CHALLENGE TO THE GODS



SKRAAK
SUDDENLY LIGHTNING STRIKES
AND THE GENERATOR EXPLODES!
KABOOM!!!
:KOFF:
IS EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
SOMEWHAT, YES.
MASTER! THE CAGE!
WHOOM

WHAT DO WE DO, MASTER?
NO CAUSE FOR CONCERN
IT CAN'T EXIST FOR LONG IN THE NATURAL WORLD.
IT'S THE WRATH OF THE GODS!
YOU BELIEVE IN THE EXISTENCE OF A [redacted] POWER THAT DISCIPLINES HUMANS, ZYOWL?
I MAY NOT HAVE FOUND A CURE FOR THE NILNIL DISEASE BY CREATING AN ARTIFICIAL LIFE FORM ..
...BUT THE ACHIEVEMENT ITSELF HAS PROPELLED ME TOWARD GOD-HOOD!
GO FORTH, ICHIGRO!
KRAK
YOUR VERY EXISTENCE IS A CHALLENGE TO THE GODS!
GWARR!

SCENE EIGHTEEN: REVELATIONS FROM THE DARK

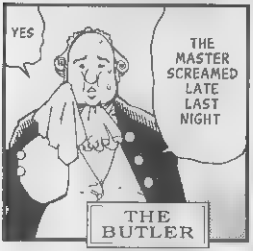
ZYKEY'S CONDITION WORSENED.
THE FIRST SIGNS OF MY BIPOLAR DISORDER HAD BEGUN TO MANIFEST
AND MY WORK HAD COME TO A DEAD END!
WHAT IS LIFE? GAH.
TCH TCH TCH
WHY DOES IT EXIST?
NNNGH... WHERE DOES LIFE COME FROM?
AAAAH... THE SCIENCE OF ZYGOTE CAN'T EXPLAIN IT!
MAYBE... COULD A LACK OF LIFE ENERGY... NNNGH... BE THE CAUSE OF THE NILNIL DISEASE...!?
SKETCH SKETCH SKETCH
IT WAS TRULY A MOMENT OF VISION DURING MY DARKEST HOUR!

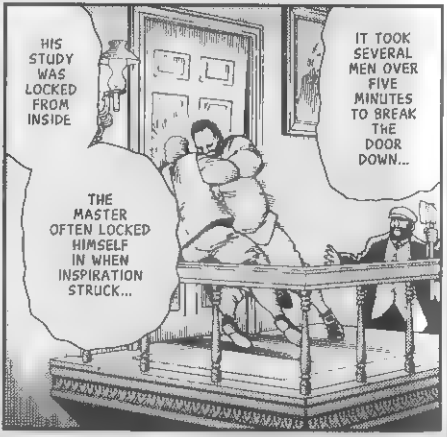
1313 Z.C.
I'M SURPRISED YOU CAME I THOUGHT YOU WERE A DOUBTER...
EVERY THEORY IS WORTHY OF RESEARCH.
WHICH ISN'T TO SAY THAT I BELIEVE THAT CON ARTIST
AND WHICH CON ARTIST MIGHT THAT BE?
HEH HEH
DUKE YODVALIN
A SPIRIT MEDIUM WHOSE BACKGROUND, AFTER TWO YEARS ON THE SOCIAL SCENE, REMAINS A MYSTERY
WHY YOU, OF COURSE.
TOOM
A-A-ALCANTARA!
HA HAA! I SEE!
IF YOU WISH TO CHALLENGE ME TO A DUEL, THERE'S A WAITING LIST. SHALL I PUT YOU DOWN?
HA HAA
COME NOW! SUCH BARBARIC METHODS NEVER SOLVE ANYTHING.
I'VE HEARD YOU ARE QUITE A SCHOLAR...
BUT SURELY YOU KNOW THAT WHAT'S WRITTEN IN THE LABYRINTH OF KNOWLEDGE CANNOT EXPLAIN ALL THE MYSTERIES OF SPACE!

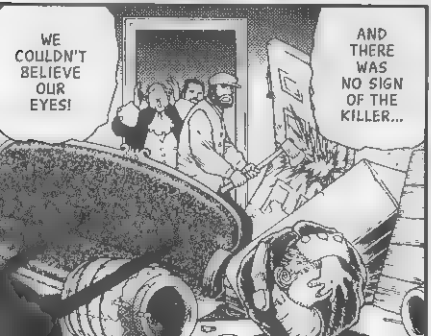
OH?
ARE YOU CLAIMING THAT *YOU* HAVE THE ANSWERS I SEEK?
DESTINY IS A CRUEL CREATURE INDEED.
THAT IS WHY I REVEAL BUT A *PORTION* OF THE INFORMATION THE SPIRITS REVEAL TO ME...
PEOPLE ONLY WANT A *SMIDGEN* OF THE TRUTH.
BUT *YOU* HAVE DARED TO *MOCK* ME!
SO TONIGHT I SHALL SUMMON A *MORE POWERFUL* SPIRIT TO PROPHECY *YOUR* DESTINY!
YOUR *CRUEL* AND *TRAGIC* DESTINY!
WE DUEL ON *MY* TERMS, NOT YOURS!

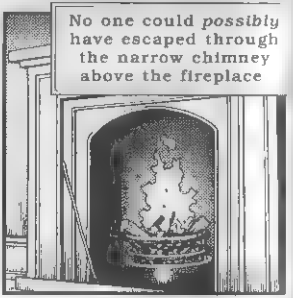
AND IN TRUTH, THE EVENTS OF THAT NIGHT DID GREATLY INFLUENCE MY LIFE THEREAFTER

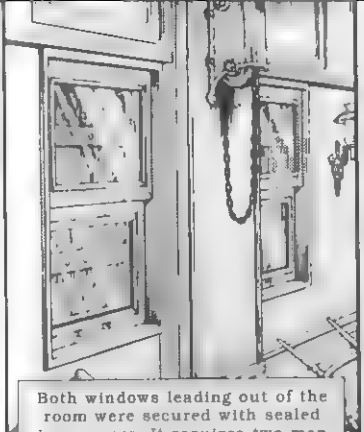
SCENE NINETEEN: THE GREAT DETECTIVE

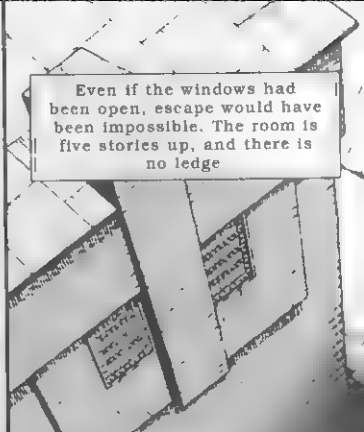



HIS STUDY WAS LOCKED FROM INSIDE
IT TOOK SEVERAL MEN OVER FIVE MINUTES TO BREAK THE DOOR DOWN...
THE MASTER OFTEN LOCKED HIMSELF IN WHEN INSPIRATION STRUCK...






Both windows leading out of the room were secured with sealed iron covers. It requires two men and a pulley system to open and close them.


Even if the windows had been open, escape would have been impossible. The room is five stories up, and there is no ledge

"... POLICE ARE UTTERLY BAFFLED"?! HOW DARE THEY!?
HOW CAN THEY SAY THAT?
POLICE COMMANDER LORD MONDAGALE
IN 1307 Z.C., LORD MONDAGALE USED HIS FAMILY FORTUNE TO FINANCE A POLICE FORCE, OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED IN 1313 Z.C.

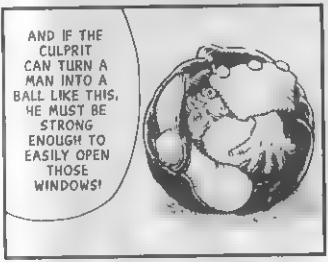
YOU SEEM AT A LOSS.
?

THE CULPRIT IS IN THIS ROOM!

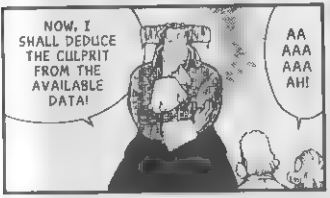
WHAT AN ODD HYPO-THESIS
I SAID IT FOR EFFECT, REALLY
PAY ME NO MIND.
WOULD YOU PLEASE BUTT OUT !?
THE MAYOR REQUESTED THAT I SOLVE THIS CASE.
FIP
THIS IS YOUR JOB.
BUT FOR ME, IT'S JUST A GAME!
PASS!
KEH KEH!
DON'T PLAY WITH THE BODY!
OF ALL THE PEOPLE...
ALTHOUGH I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME...
GALE HAD A MORE COMPEL-LING REASON TO HATE ME THAN MERELY LOSING OVER THIS CASE...
HMM.
WAS THE FLOOR WET WHEN YOU ENTERED THE ROOM?
NO, SIRE

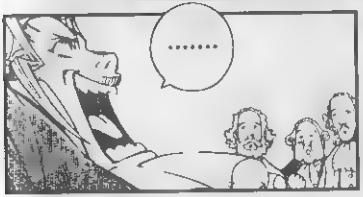
POLICE COMMANDER, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THIS CONTAINER IS?
NO!

IT'S A *CONDENSER*. THE EXTERIOR IS COVERED WITH A METAL SHEET, AND THE INTERIOR IS FILLED WITH A SUPER-CONDUCTING FLUID TO STORE ELECTRO-SPIRITS.
IF THE LIQUID DIDN'T SPILL, IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN *TAKEN!*


AND IF THE CULPRIT CAN TURN A MAN INTO A BALL LIKE THIS, HE MUST BE STRONG ENOUGH TO EASILY OPEN THOSE WINDOWS!

THE KILLER IS--
WAAR


NOW, I SHALL DEDUCE THE CULPRIT FROM THE AVAILABLE DATA!
AA AAA AAA AH!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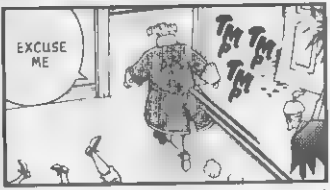
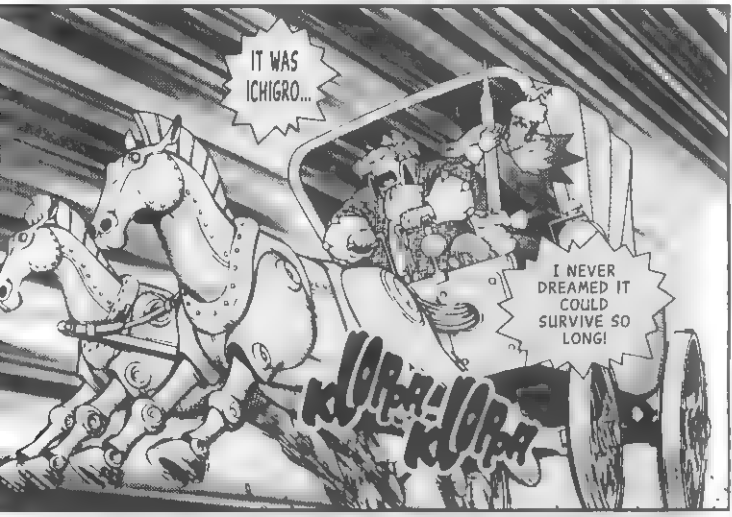
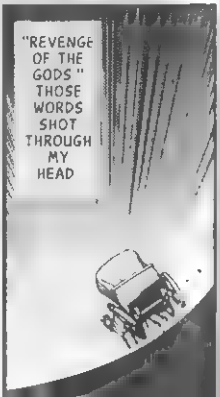

EXCUSE ME
TM TM TM

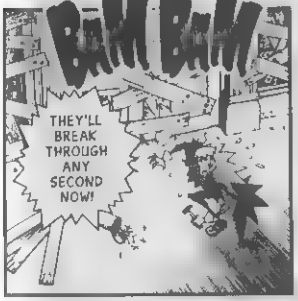
I DON'T TRUST THAT MAN!

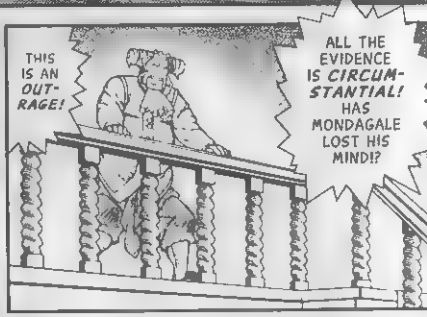

IT WAS ICHIGRO...
I NEVER DREAMED IT COULD SURVIVE SO LONG!
KLOPPA! KLOPPA

MY SECOND LIFE FORM IS AT THE LAB!
MYEE
BABY GYGRO
IF THEY SEARCH MY MANSION, THE FINGER IS SURE TO POINT AT ME!


"REVENGE OF THE GODS" THOSE WORDS SHOT THROUGH MY HEAD

SCENE TWENTY: REVENGE OF THE MEDIOCRE



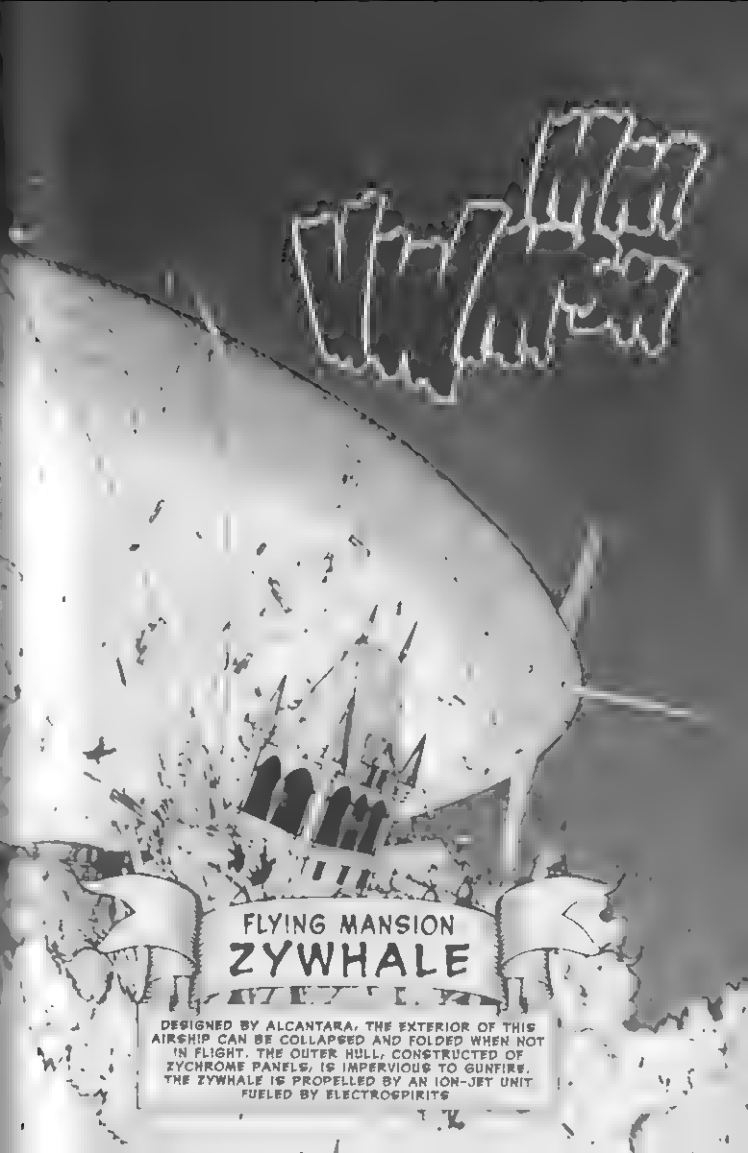


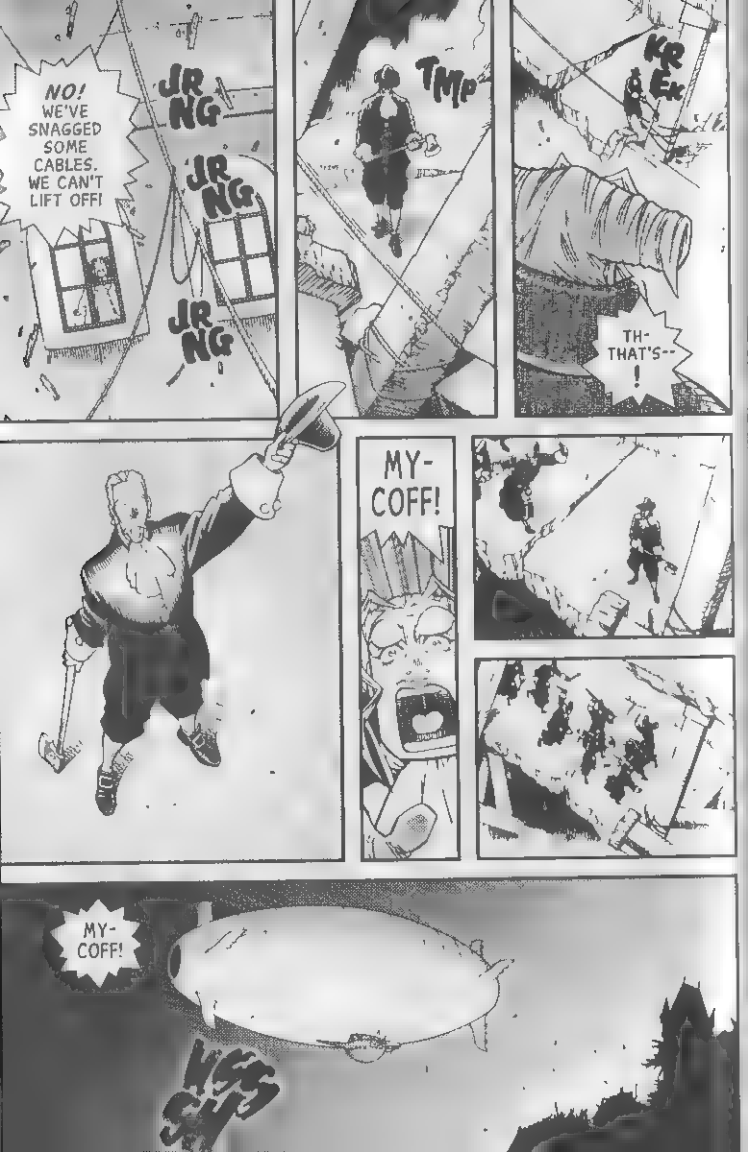
WHAT'S THE MATTER, ZYOWL!? HURRY UP!
IF WE TURN YOU IN TO THE POLICE
CHAK
I WONDER HOW GENEROUS THE REWARD WOULD BE?
BROTHER !?
ZYOWL...! WHY YOU...!
I FEAR THE WRATH OF THE GODS... AND LEAVING ZYGOTE!

OUR PREDICAMENT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WRATH OF GODS!
IT'S MERELY AN ACT OF REVENGE
THE REVENGE OF THOSE WHO CANNOT SEE PAST THEIR OWN MEDIOCRITY!
BUT YOU BOTH
HAVE THE RIGHT TO TAKE PART IN THIS REVOLT AGAINST ME

YOU ARE AN ARROGANT AND DISGUSTING INFIDEL!
BUT
...YOU ARE ALSO THE FIRST PERSON IN THIS LAND TO TREAT US LIKE MEN.
I SHALL NEVER FORGET YOUR WORDS TO ME WHEN WE FIRST MET.
GOOD!
I WILL FOLLOW YOU, MASTER!
AND YOU, ZYCROW !?
ME TOO!
THERE THEY ARE!
FIRE!
BLAM
BLAM
AA AAA GH!
ZY-CROW!

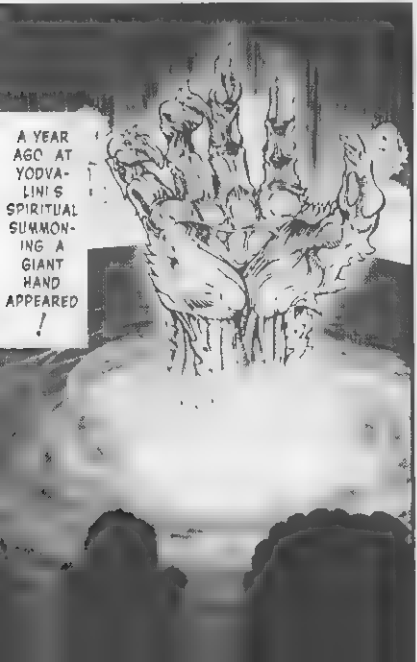
M-MA-MASTER... LEAVE ME AND GO...
DO YOU THINK I WOULD LEAVE YOU BEHIND?
OPEN SECTION A, VALVES ONE TO FIVE!
YES, SIRE!
ON-WARD! TO THE DEPTHS OF HELL!
GYAH!
AGH!
GAH!
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM
BOOM!!
YA AAA AH!
OPEN SECTION B VALVES ONE TO FIVE FOLLOWED BY SECTION C, VALVES ONE TO FIVE!
YES, SIRE!
SKRK
WHAT IS THIS?

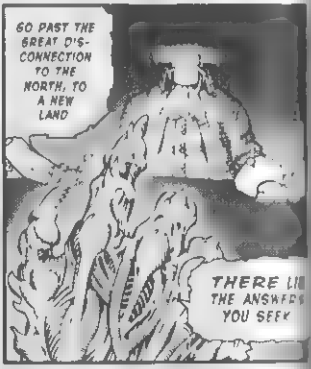

FLYING MANSION
ZYWHALE
DESIGNED BY ALCANTARA, THE EXTERIOR OF THIS AIRSHIP CAN BE COLLAPSED AND FOLDED WHEN NOT IN FLIGHT. THE OUTER HULL, CONSTRUCTED OF ZYCHROME PANELS, IS IMPERVIOUS TO GUNFIRE. THE ZYWHALE IS PROPELLED BY AN ION-JET UNIT FUELED BY ELECTROSPIRITS

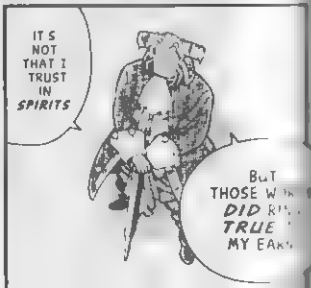

NO! WE'VE SNAGGED SOME CABLES. WE CAN'T LIFT OFF!
JRNG
JRNG
JRNG
TMP
KR EX
TH-THAT'S--!
MY-COFF!
MY-COFF!
WSSS

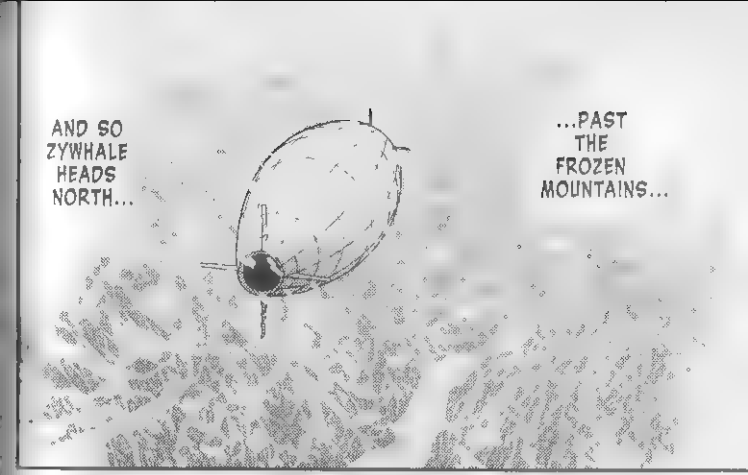
MEAN-
WHILE,
AT
THE
HOME
OF
ZYKEY
ANOTHER
DRAMA
IS UN-
FOLDING
STUPID GIRL! CATCHING SUCH A HORRID DISEASE!
SMACK
A WOMAN WHO CAN'T BEAR CHILDREN IS WORTH-LESS!
I WISH YOU WOULD JUST DIE!
SMAK
IT WILL BE MY PLEASURE TO TAKE HER OFF YOUR HANDS!
TOOM
WHAT WILL YOU PAY ME !?
DIDN'T YOU JUST SAY SHE WAS WORTH-LESS!?
STOP! THIEF!

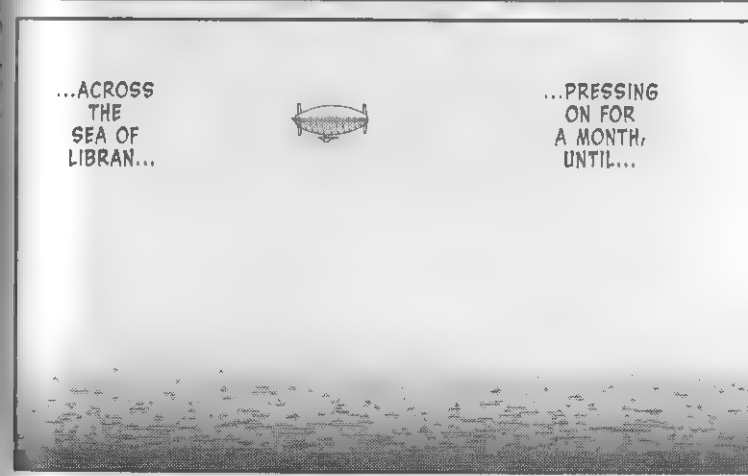
SCENE TWENTY-ONE: TO THE NEW LANDS!








AND SO ZYWHALE HEADS NORTH...
...PAST THE FROZEN MOUNTAINS...


...ACROSS THE SEA OF LIBRAN...
...PRESSING ON FOR A MONTH, UNTIL...

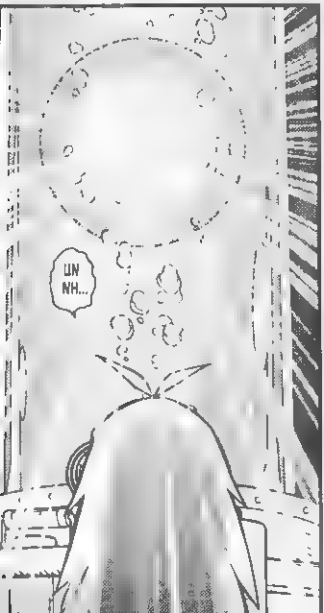
LOOK!
THE GREAT DISCONNECTION-- AND THE ANTIPODES BEYOND IT!

I WILL BE THE *FIRST* TO CROSS THE GRAND CHASM...
I WILL EXPLORE NEW LANDS AND FIND THE "SECRET OF LIFE"!

GREAT
DISCONNECTION
OTHER SIDE WHICH DOES THE SAME.
FAR SIDE OF THE DIVIDE "ANTIPODES."

ENVOY OF FORTUNE
ACT SIX

SCENE TWENTY-TWO: TRIUMPHANT RETURN



ASHIKA, MAY I SPEAK..?
YOU SEE, THE TRUTH IS...
...I DON'T REALLY CARE IF I CAN'T BE CURED OF THE NILNIL DISEASE!
IF I WAS *WELL*...
...THEN MASTER AL WOULDN'T BE *INTERESTED* IN ME...
ARE YOU...
...*IN LOVE* WITH MISTER AL?
ASHIKA FELT A LITTLE JEALOUS.

THE GREAT PRIMERO STATUE

CONSTRUCTED BY KING MOSE IN 737 E.P., THIS ENORMOUS STATUE OF MAGNA PRIMERO IS ONE OF THE "SEVEN GREAT WONDERS" OF MARMUNDO. INSCRIBED ON THE BASE ARE THE WORDS "GO BACK. NOTHING EXISTS BEYOND ME" - A WARNING OF THE *GRAN ABISMO* WHICH LIES PAST THE STATUE.

SCENE TWENTY-THREE: THE ENVOY OF DESTINY

THIS IS OUR SECRET BASE-- *ZYBASE*.
WE FOUND THIS PLACE WHEN WE FIRST CROSSED THE GREAT DISCON-NECTION...
IT'S A PERFECT HIDEOUT, DON'T YOU AGREE?
IT'S BEEN TWO AND A HALF MONTHS SINCE WE LEFT...
I HOPE ZYOWL HAS BEEN BEHAVING HIMSELF IN OUR ABSENCE!
HEY! THAT'S-- !
SPOT!
SPLASH

RATA
RATA
RATA
!
ZY-
OWL!

TMP

ASHIKA !
LADY RULIYA !
HH HMM GH!
THIS IS ASHIKA'S KNIGHT !?
BUT SHE'S A WOMAN!
AND WHY DOES SHE WEAR SUCH A REVEALING OUTFIT?
HMM
MASTER AL

QUITE THE MAMMAL!
GRRRR
I AM RULIYA OF PERLA!
A FEMALE AQUA KNIGHT TALK ABOUT A BARBARIC LAND
HOW DID YOU FIND THIS PLACE?
THE ORCA LED ME TO YOU!
I SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE!
She means ME
I'VE COME TO RETRIEVE THE LIGHT SPHERE YOU STOLE--AND TO FREE MY SQUIRE, ASHIKA!

I WILL FREE ASHIKA. HOW-EVER...
I CANNOT RETURN THE LIGHT SPHERE--NOT AFTER ALL THE TROUBLE I'VE GONE THROUGH TO GET IT!
YES, YES... SO I HEARD.
ALSO SOMETHING ABOUT A CURE FOR SOME DISEASE...
?
-GASP- LADY RULIYA!
AAAH... YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE ME, ASHIKA !?
-SOB-
M-M-MISS ZYKEY..
PING
WHO IS THIS WOMAN?
RR RMM MM

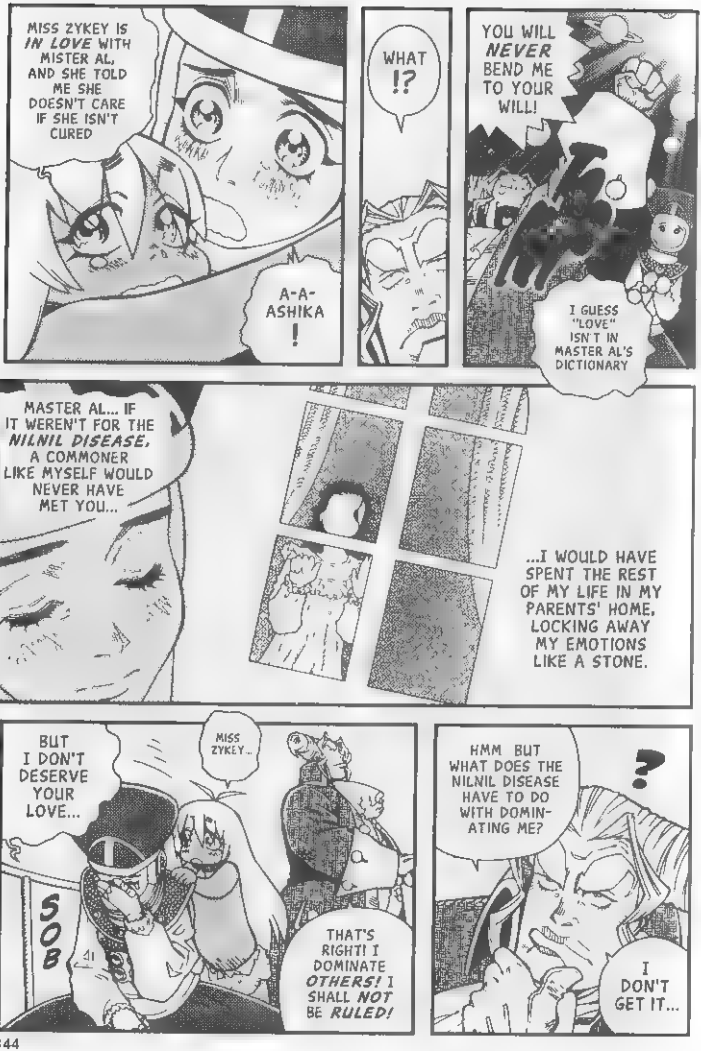
I DON'T CARE *HOW* JUST YOUR MOTIVES ARE...
I HAVE MY OWN-- AND I *WILL NOT* BACK DOWN!
ASHIKA, LISTEN AND BE BRAVE.
LORD ARRABARUS HAS PASSED ON.
WOO OOH!
NO! IT'S NOT TRUE!
A-A-ASHIKA!

I SWORE TO HONOR HIS DYING REQUEST!
THE KNIGHT OF PARCA GAVE ME THIS DEMON BLADE MUERTO-GARA...
...AND I SWEAR ON IT THAT FATE HAS BROUGHT ME HERE TO STOP YOU!
"FATE"?
THEN YOU ARE MERELY A PAWN OF DESTINY?
NO MATTER WHAT DEPTH OR TIDES THERE ARE, I WILL ACCEPT THEM!
FOREIGNER ALCANTARA, I CHALLENGE YOU TO A DUEL!
FATE EXISTS FOR ME TO CHANGE IT!
ALL RIGHT THEN--I ACCEPT YOUR CHAL-LENGE!

MASTER, LEAVE HER TO ME...
A DIRTY TRICK OR TWO, AND I CAN EASILY CAPTURE HER-- AND DO *THIS* AND *THAT*...
KU KEKE KEKE KEH!
UFF
UFF
UNF
NO!
GAH!
BUT YOU NEVER FACED AN AQUA KNIGHT IN BATTLE BEFORE! WHY START NOW!?
NONE OF THEM OFFICIALLY CHAL-LENGED ME BEFORE.
...WHICH IS THE GREATER-- MY AMBITION OR THE WILL OF THE GODS?
AND NOW...
THIS DUEL SHALL *DETER-MINE*...
WHEN IT COMES TO MATTERS OF SUCH GREAT IMPORT, AN EASY VICTORY WILL NOT SATISFY!

SCENE TWENTY-FOUR: ZYKEY'S SECRET FEELINGS

UMMM.. MISS ZYKEY...
ASHIKA ?
PLEASE STOP MISTER AL AND LADY RULIYA FROM FIGHTING...
I *LIKE* MISS ZYKEY, MISTER AL, LADY RULIYA, FATHER, AND MY MOTHER--I LIKE THEM ALL THE *SAME*...
ASHIKA ...
AND ME?
YOU I *DON'T* LIKE, ZYCROW!
WHY YOU LI'L--
IF *YOU* DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE CURED OR NOT, THEN THERE'S NOTHING FOR THEM TO FIGHT OVER!
"DON'T CARE IF YOU'RE CURED" ? WHAT DOES HE MEAN?
??
UM... UH...


MISS ZYKEY IS *IN LOVE* WITH MISTER AL, AND SHE TOLD ME SHE DOESN'T CARE IF SHE ISN'T CURED
A-A-ASHIKA !
WHAT !?
YOU WILL *NEVER* BEND ME TO YOUR WILL!
I GUESS "LOVE" ISN'T IN MASTER AL'S DICTIONARY
MASTER AL... IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE *NILNIL DISEASE*, A COMMONER LIKE MYSELF WOULD NEVER HAVE MET YOU...
...I WOULD HAVE SPENT THE REST OF MY LIFE IN MY PARENTS' HOME, LOCKING AWAY MY EMOTIONS LIKE A STONE.
BUT I DON'T DESERVE YOUR LOVE...
MISS ZYKEY..
SOB
THAT'S RIGHT! I DOMINATE *OTHERS!* I SHALL *NOT* BE *RULED!*
HMM BUT WHAT DOES THE NILNIL DISEASE HAVE TO DO WITH DOMINATING ME?
?
I DON'T GET IT...

RULIYA, NOT BEING AS DIM-WITTED AS ALCANTARA, UNDERSTOOD ZYKEY'S REASONING IMMEDIATELY..
I SEE...
...BUT AS A WOMAN, SHE FELT DISDAIN FOR ZYKEY
YOU'RE PATH-ETIC!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO? CRY UNTIL SOMEONE GIVES YOU A KIND WORD?
OUCH HARSH!
THAT IS NEVER THE WAY! IF YOU DON'T FIGHT FOR YOUR HAPPINESS, WHO WILL?
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY KNOW ABOUT ME!?
I'M JUST... JUST...
UU UH
SHAA
MISS ZYKEY !
FUMP

SCENE TWENTY-FIVE: BULIYA'S OVERCONFIDENCE

HEH! I'VE PRACTICALLY WON ALREADY.
My, you ARE confident!
HE'S JUST A MAN!
MMOOOO
FOREIGNER OR NOT, HE'S NO MATCH FOR ONE WHO HAS DEFEATED THE LEGENDARY DEMON KNIGHT!
NOT EVEN THE TWELVE KNIGHTS OF PRIMERO CAN BEAT ME NOW!
GWAHAHA
HAHA
I CAN'T WAIT TO GO HOME MY MOTHER WILL BE SO PROUD!
Don't get careless Ruisyal PLEASE
HA! HERE HE COMES!

WAITING.
SUPER-CONDUCTING
ELECTRO ARMOR
ZYARMOR
STUDY OF THE DESIGN OF AQUA KNIGHT CASTOFFS AND
THE OUTER LAYER IS FASHIONED OF ZYCHROME

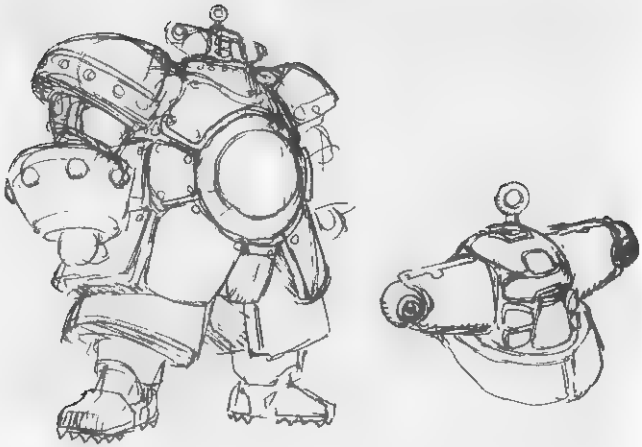
SKY DANCER
AIIEE EEEEE! IT'S BEGUN!
MISS ZYKEY IS STILL ASLEEP.
DO THEY HAVE TO FIGHT ?
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
WELL, IT WAS SORT OF ENJOYABLE, ACTU-ALLY
GETTING TIED UP BY A PRETTY GIRL HAS ITS BRIGHT SIDE..
OH, I SEE...THEN THIS TIME, WE CAN TIE HER UP..
AND DO THIS AND THAT . AND THAT TOO.
GEH HEH HEH HEH HEH HEHHH!
FIGHT HARD, LADY RULIYA!

HAA AAA AAH!
HUH?
WHIFF
RGH RGH RGH
What are you DOING!? You can't just charge in headfirst with a short sword!
I KNOW! BE QUIET!
IF I CAN HIT HIM WITH THE MUERTOGARA, I'LL WIN! A DONE DEAL!

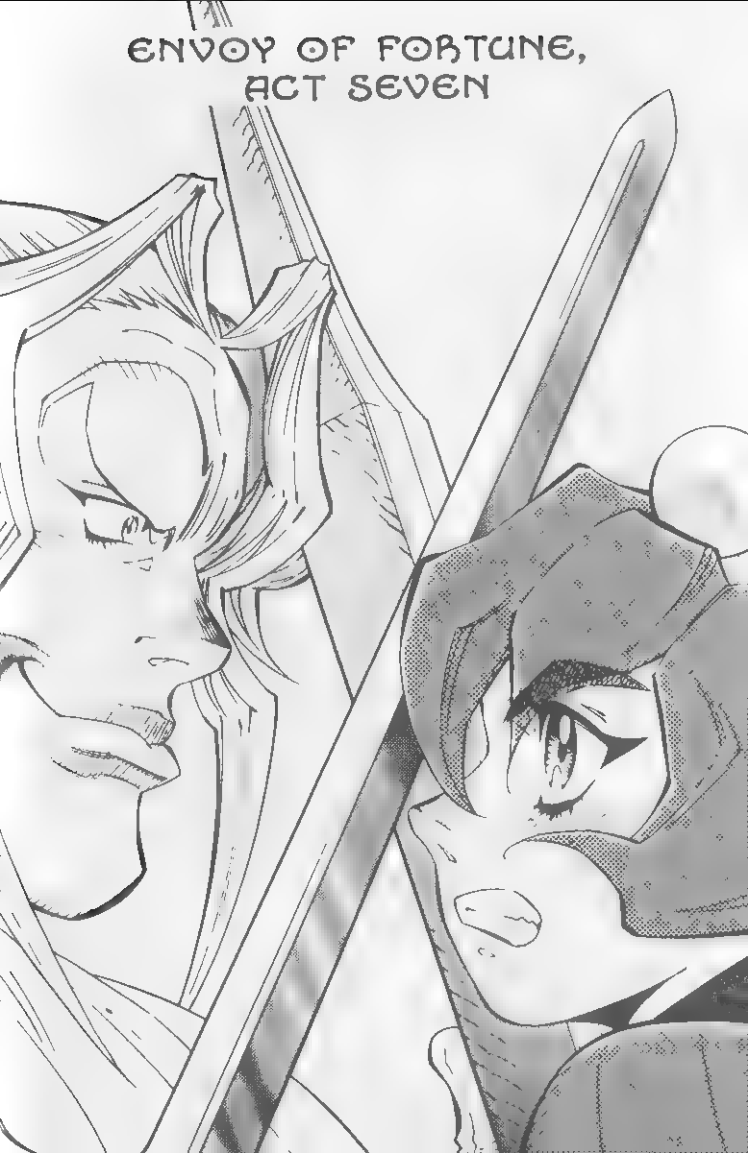
SKRING
SH
KLK

WH-
WHAT
!?
EEEEEE
SN
RR
RR

SPSS SSHA RA
YOU CLAIM TO BE AN ENVOY OF DESTINY...
ARE YOUR WORDS MERE SOUND AND FURY?
MUERTOGARA CAN SEVER ANY BLADE FORGED BY MAN EVEN THE DEMON BLADE ITSELF
WHY ISN'T IT WORKING!?

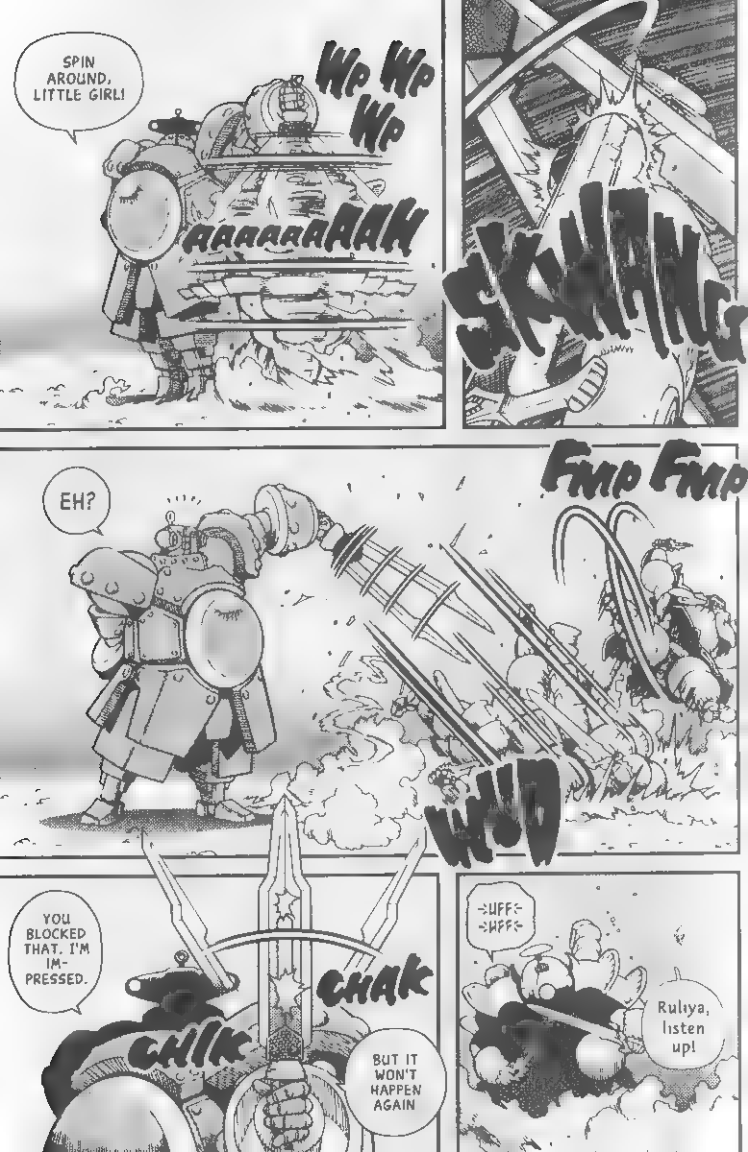


ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT SEVEN



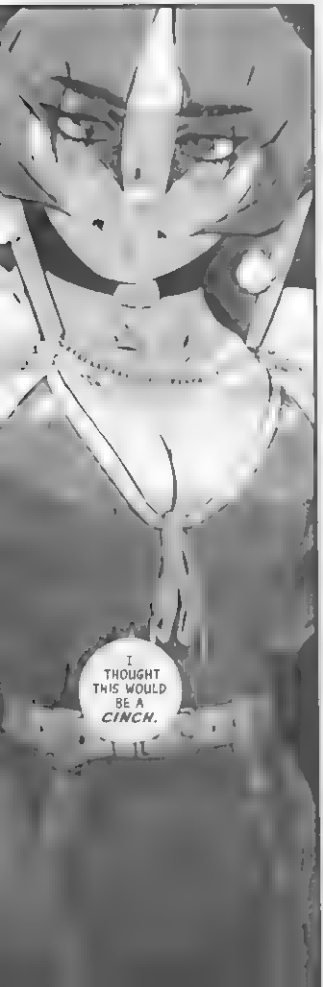
GLUP
HUP GUP
-KOFF-
HE HIT ONE OF MY BRONCHIA!
THE EMERGENCY VALVE...
GP UP
CHAK
YOU ONLY HAVE ONE BREATHING UNIT REMAINING
WHEN I DESTROY THAT, YOU DROWN...
AND VICTORY IS MINE!

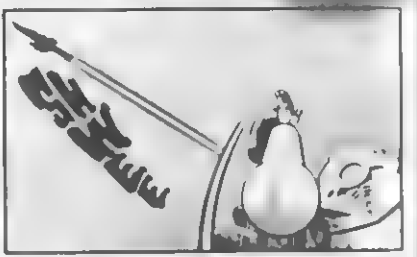
NOOO!
Don't panic, Ruliya!
WHM SH
SHHH
SHHH
SHH

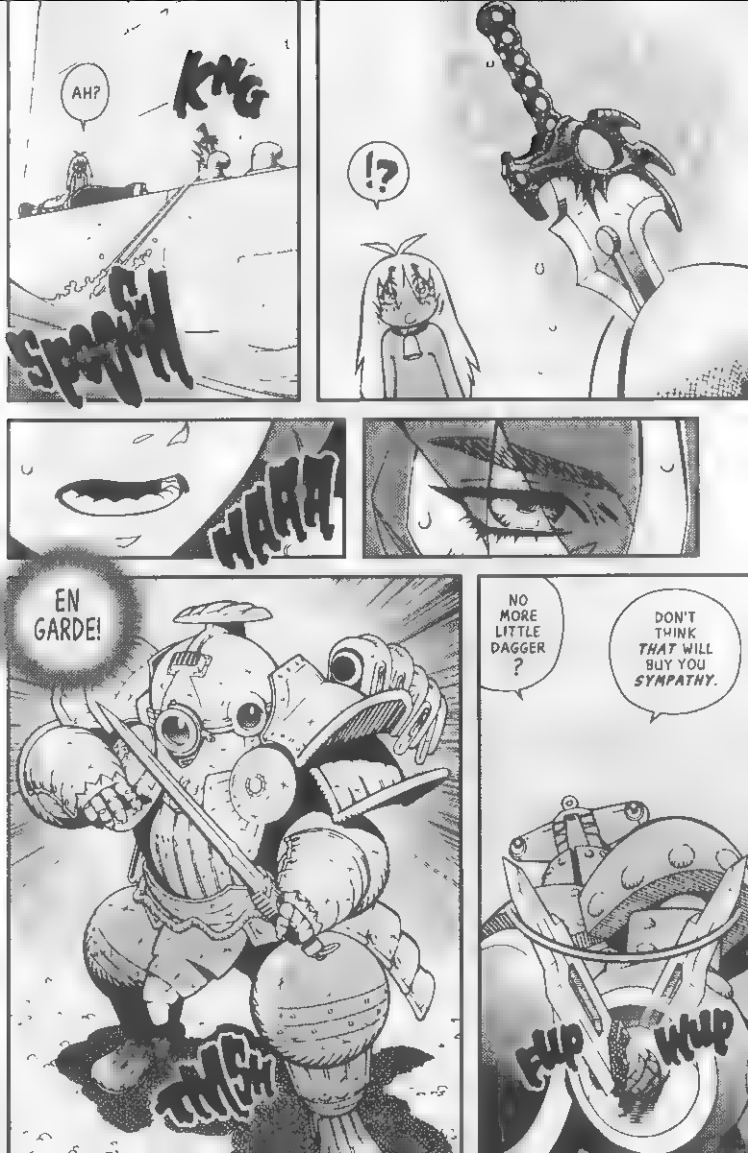

SPIN AROUND, LITTLE GIRL!
WP WP WP
AAAAAAAAAH
SKWANG
EH?
FMP FMP
WUD
YOU BLOCKED THAT. I'M IM-PRESSED.
CHAK
CHIK
BUT IT WON'T HAPPEN AGAIN
=UFF=
=UFF=
Ruliya, listen up!

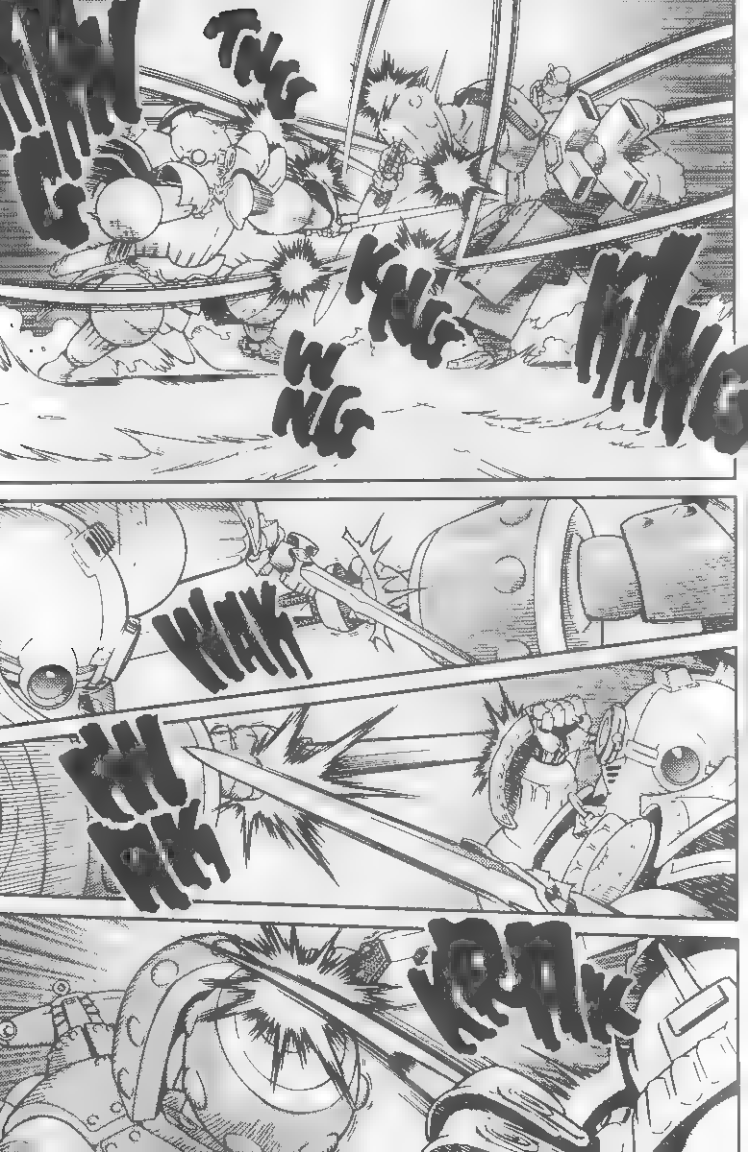
I sense some kind of SPIRIT ENERGY surrounding that armor.
THAT'S what's preventing the Blade of Parca from working.
WHAT POWER CAN BLOCK A DEMON SWORD!?
I feel some kind of LIGHTNING striking nearby...
...but where ?
I'll go look for the SOURCE
Keep your cool until I get back!
PINOQUE!
Don't give up hope, Ruliya!

SCENE TWENTY-SIX: BULIYA'S TRUE SPIRIT






AH?
KNG
SPOOSH
!?
HARA
EN GARDE!
TIMISH
NO MORE LITTLE DAGGER ?
DON'T THINK THAT WILL BUY YOU SYMPATHY.
HUP
WUP


TNG
KANG
WNG
KAK
RK
RRAK

!?
HMM
UNNGH
GRR RRR!
IT'S AS IF SHE'S A NEW FOE!
SHE ANALYZED MY TIMING DURING THOSE FEW BOUTS-- AND NOW SHE'S COUNTERING MY EVERY MOVE!

SCENE TWENTY-SEVEN: RULIYA'S PERIL!

ZLT
ZAP
JIK!
DENK!!
K!!
So this LARGE BABY is controlling the spirits...!
If only I can DISTRACT him...
Hi, there!
GR RRR WOO?
Tickle, tickle!
GR WOO N!
Tee hee! I did it!
GRRRRRR!!

THIS IS THE INCRED BLE ZYARMOR!
PERMIT ME TO PONTIFICATE
PLATED WITH 1⅞ ZYINCHES OF ZYCHROME AND AVERAGE
.. THE ZYARMOR USES MAGNESPIRITS TO CREATE WATER CURRENTS ON THE ARMOR'S SURFACE, THUS LESSENING IMPACT DAMAGE!
AND MY COMPASS SWORD--
SNIKT
--ITS CIRCULAR ROTATION CREATES AN IMPENE-TRABLE SHIELD
WRRRR
WHHHHHHH
NO MATTER WHAT STRATEGY YOU EMPLOY, YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME!
TWISH

GNK
KA
NG
TNK
AH!
OH, NO!
WH
RR
SH
A
NG
IT'S ALL OVER!
WHRRRR
RRR
HA HA HA HA HAA! I'VE GOT YOU NOW!

SKREESH
UNN NGH!

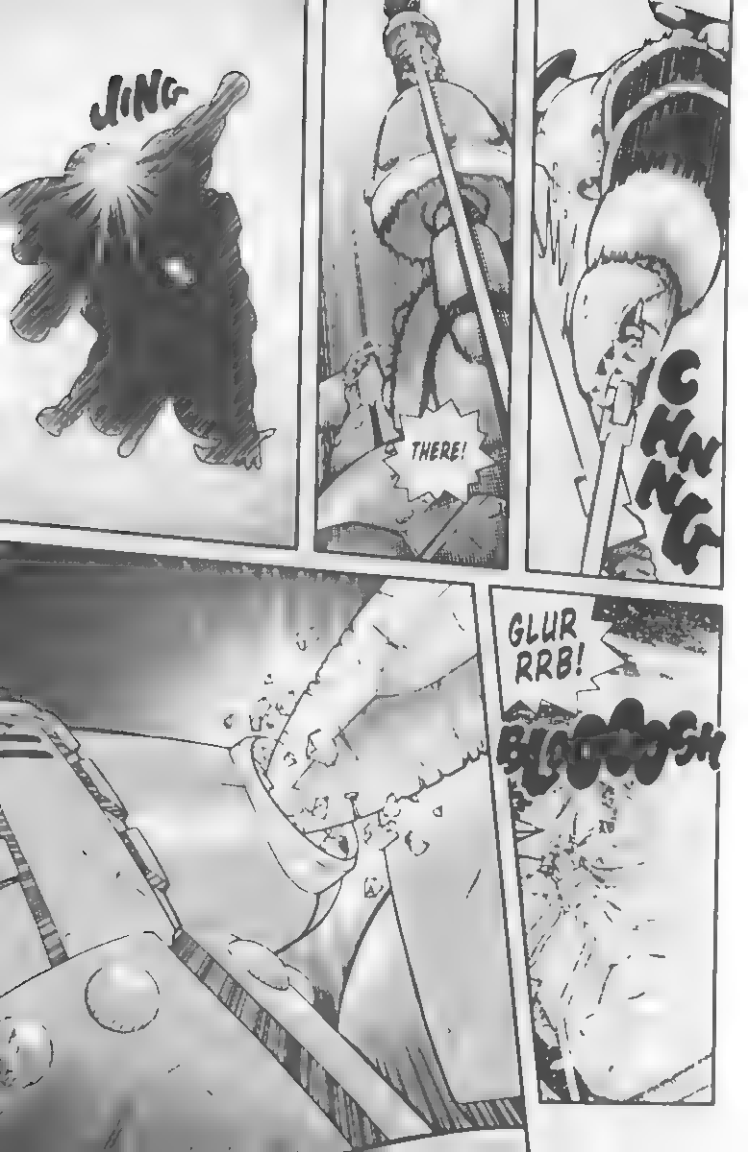
SPSSS
KATING
HA HA HA HA HAAA!
WRRRR
HUH?
WUR RURR
KK
POWER-- NO LONGER BEING SENT
CHK
I'LL PUNISH GYGRO LATER!
REGARD-LESS, THIS MATCH IS OVER!
I'VE DESTROYED BOTH OF YOUR BREATHING UNITS!
SPSSSH
IN MOMENTS, YOU WILL RUN OUT OF AIR. YIELD!
PSSSH
FWNK

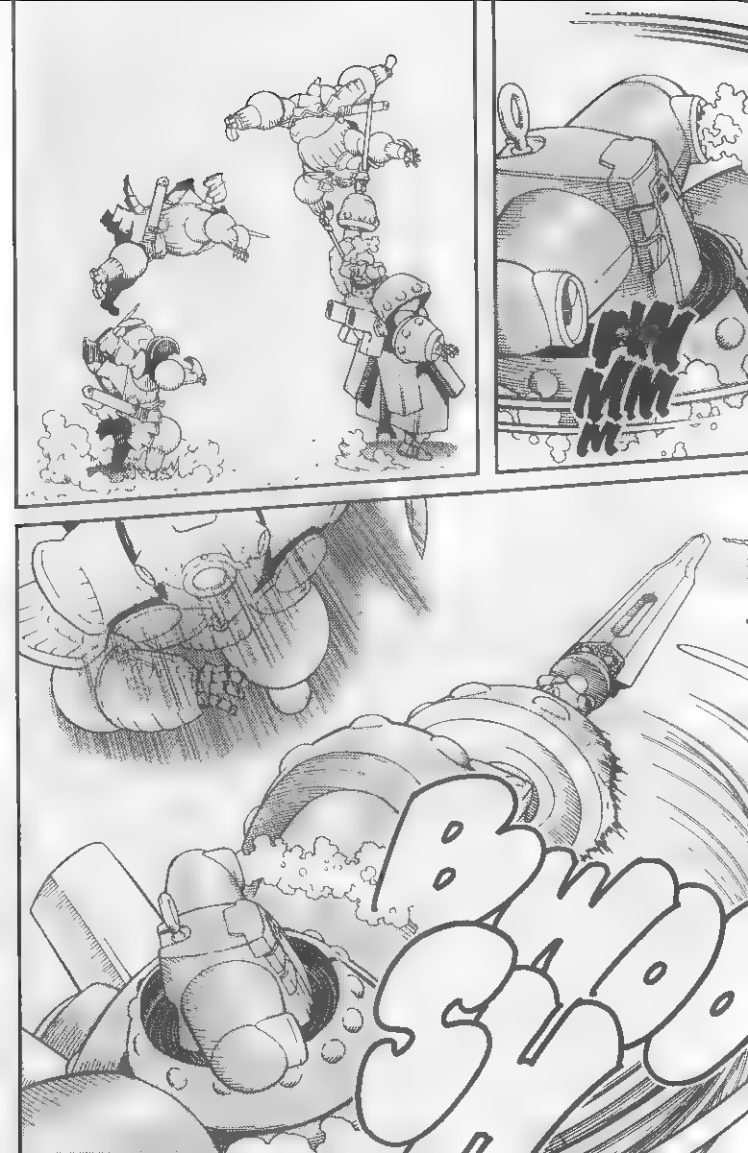
SCENE TWENTY-EIGHT: BULIYA'S COURAGE!

SHE CAN'T HAVE MORE THAN A MINUTE OF AIR LEFT IN HER ARMOR . YET *STILL* SHE FIGHTS ON!
HOW CAN SHE REMAIN CALM-- COUNTERING MY EVERY ATTACK!?
I AM A VETERAN OF SEVEN THOUSAND BATTLES! WHAT OPPONENT HAS EVER SHOWN SUCH STRENGTH OF SPIRIT!?
NONE!
FEMALE KNIGHT! I RESPECT YOUR COURAGE FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART! TO HONOR IT..
I SWEAR UPON THE NAME OF ALCANTARA ..
I SHALL FIGHT YOU TO YOUR *DYING BREATH!*

HE'S SO POWER-FUL!
OFFENSE AND DEFENSE-- BOTH PERFECT!
UFF
HUFF
IF I DEFEAT HIM...
I CAN TRULY CALL MYSELF A KNIGHT!
KRANG
SKRCHNNGG

IS THIS HER ALL-OUT ATTACK!?
FM OM


JING
THERE!
CHNNG
GLUR
RRB!
BLOOOOSH


MM
M

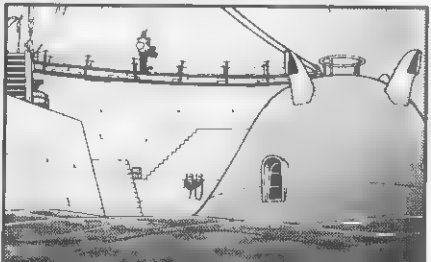
SHING

SHAAAAAA
KOFF-
KOFF-
HUFF
UFF
HUFF
UFF
HUFF
YOU.. ARE VICTORI-OUS...
KOFF
WELL FOUGHT!

AS PROMISED, I SHALL RETURN ASHIKA AND THE LIGHT SPHERE TO YOU

HM!?

ZYCROW!
ZYOWL!?



Y-
YOU!
LA GUÍA DE LA MANO DORADA!?

ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT EIGHT

WELL MET, TRAVELER!
I'm scared, Ruliya!
That one's not human!
PINOQUE!
WHERE IS ASHIKA !?

BUT NOW YOUR JOURNEY IS AT AN END!
M-M-MASTER...
A SURPRISE ATTACK... OWWWW WWWCH...
LA GUÍA DE LA MANO DORADA...!
SO IT WAS THE LIGHT SPHERE YOU WERE AFTER ALL ALONG!

SCENE TWENTY-NINE: THE STIR OF ANCIENT GODS

WHO ARE YOU!?
BUT A SERVANT
A LOYAL SERVANT-- OF THE HIDDEN RULER.
RA HA HA!
TREMBLE IN FEAR, THOSE WHO WOULD ASK THE NAME OF MY MASTER!

MANKIND WAS SEALED AWAY
MY MASTER, THE GOD OF METAL, SHIGASHUGAL!

NEVER HEARD OF HIM.
HMPH
THE ONLY GOD I BELIEVE IN IS THE GOD OF GEOMETRY!
AA AA RR GH!
YOUR KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE THAT OF A MOTH FLYING INTO A FLAME!
BUT "ALGO NEVIS"--I REMEMBER READING THAT NAME IN THE LABYRINTH OF KNOWLEDGE.
THE DESCENDANTS OF TSUIGUMA, THE FOUNDERS OF THE ZYGOTE CULTURE, ONCE SPOKE OF AN ANCIENT RACE OF PEOPLE WHO CONTROLLED AN EMPIRE ON A DISTANT STAR...
CORRECT. THE LORDS OF ALGO NEVIS CREATED THIS SHELL OF A WORLD TO SEAL AWAY MY MASTER!
THIS LIGHT SPHERE IS ONE OF THIS WORLD'S KEYSTONES. BY COLLECTING ALL OF THE KEYSTONES-- I SHALL RELEASE MY MASTER!
SO THEN ..
YOU LIED TO ME ABOUT THAT SPHERE BEING THE SECRET TO LIFE!?
NOT AT ALL...
YOUR WISHES CAN BE FULFILLED-- WHEN MY MASTER IS RELEASED!

IMMORTALITY! FIRE OF LIFE! ETERNAL FORTUNE!
ALL YOURS-- IF YOU DENOUNCE YOUR GODS AND WORSHIP MINE!
IF YOU WISH TO SEE DUST TURNED TO DIAMONDS AND WATER TO FIRE...
...THEN CAST ASIDE YOUR WEAK BODIES OF FLESH--AND ACCEPT THE TRUE POWER OF METAL!
YOU AND YOUR FATHER CALLED ME TO THIS WORLD ALCANTARA
TAKE PRIDE IN YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENT!
!
OUR SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS...
BROUGHT THIS MONSTER TO OUR WORLD!?
I DON'T REALLY GET ALL THIS, BUT--
KATMP

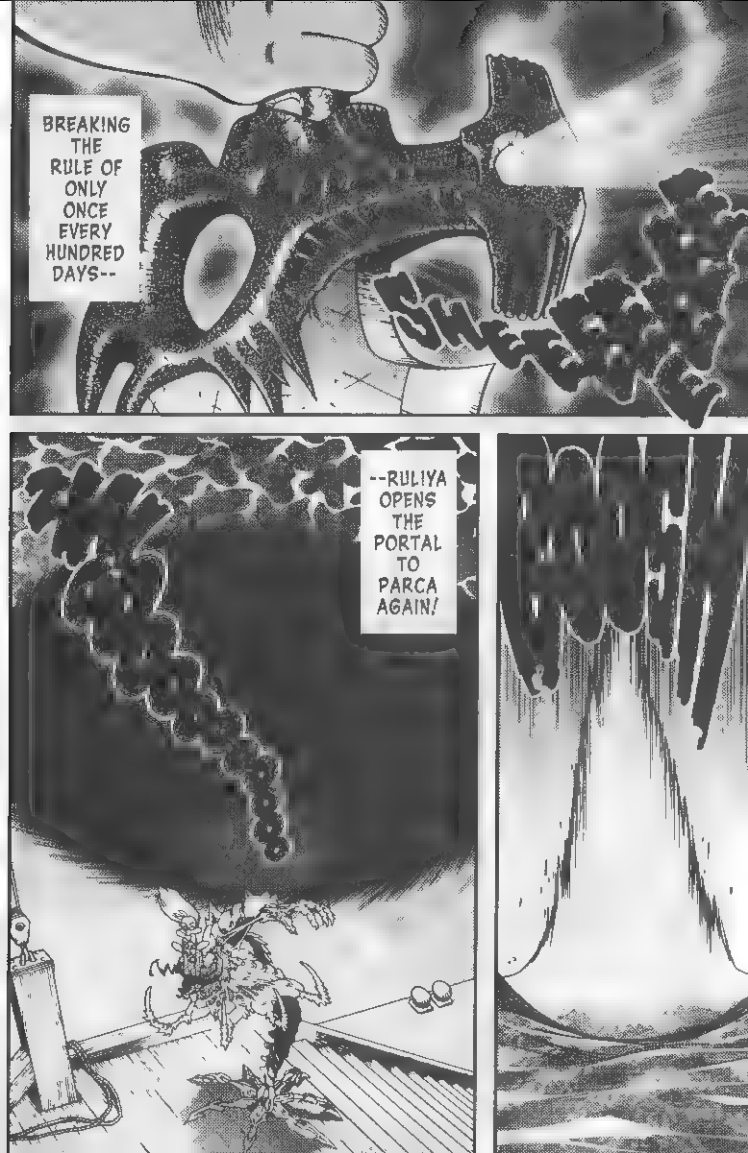
I, RULIYA OF PERLA, WON THAT SPHERE IN A FAIR DUEL WITH THIS MAN.
YOU CAN RETURN IT TO ME, OR...
.UPON THE NAME OF MAGNA PRIMERO...
...YOU WILL HAVE TO FIGHT ME FOR IT!
SHE CAN'T POSSIBLY BEAT HIM!

FOOLISH BEING !
KKKK KK
KK KK KK
KK KK KK
MOTHER !
SHWEEE

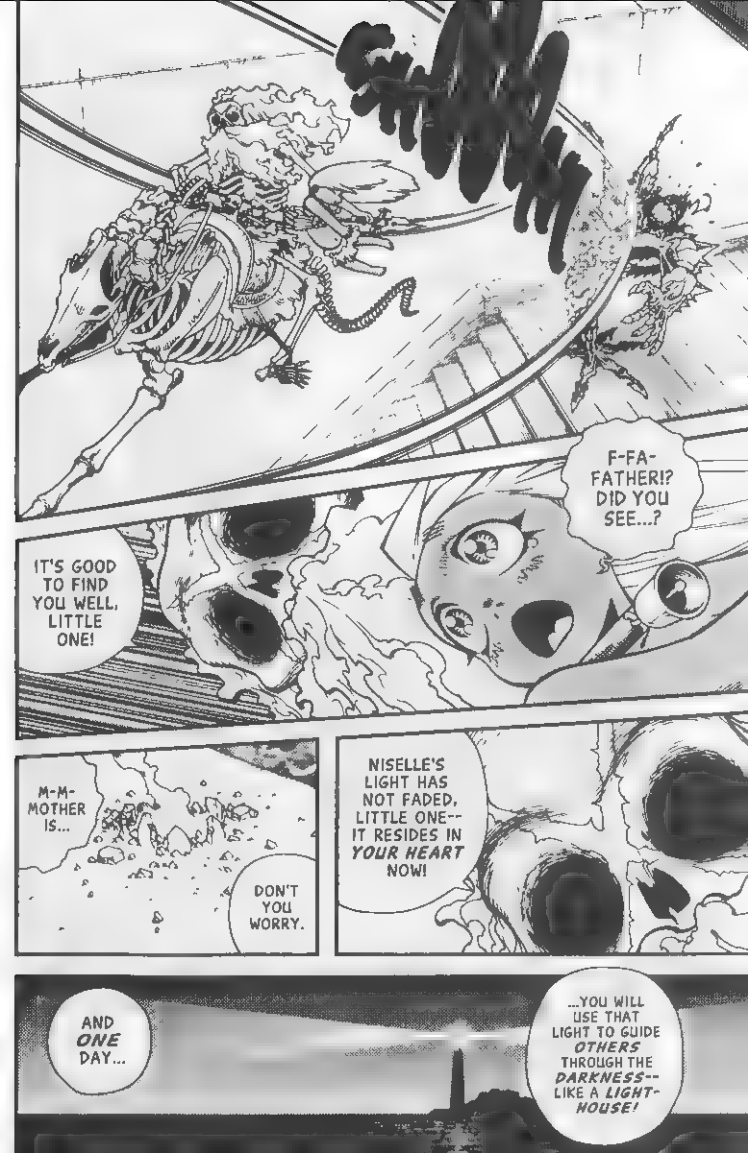
ASHIKA
!?
TOOMP
FWASSSHH
WHAT THE--
!?

AHH! S-S- SO WARM...!
MOTHER...!
FSSHT
THE LIGHT-- IT MOVED INTO ASHIKA...!
I SEE.
I WAS ALMOST DECEIVED! THE TRUE KEY-STONE...
AIE EEE!
...IS NOT THIS SPHERE, BUT...
PMSH

...THIS CHILD!
MOTHER! FATHER!
GYA AAA AA!
The power has returned to the Blade of Parca!
WHAT!? BUT HOW!?


BREAKING THE RULE OF ONLY ONCE EVERY HUNDRED DAYS--
SHEEEEE
--RULIYA OPENS THE PORTAL TO PARCA AGAIN!

LITTLE ONE!
BOOOOOM


F-FA-FATHER!? DID YOU SEE...?
IT'S GOOD TO FIND YOU WELL, LITTLE ONE!
M-M-MOTHER IS...
DON'T YOU WORRY.
NISELLE'S LIGHT HAS NOT FADED, LITTLE ONE-- IT RESIDES IN *YOUR HEART* NOW!
AND *ONE* DAY...
...YOU WILL USE THAT LIGHT TO GUIDE *OTHERS* THROUGH THE *DARKNESS*-- LIKE A *LIGHT-HOUSE!*

SCENE THIRTY: FOUR LEVELS, TWO POLES, EIGHT STRENGTHS

LORD ARRA-BARUS, WHAT . ?
LADY RULIYA, I HAVE OBSERVED YOUR TRAVELS FROM PARCA--
--AND I THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART!
NOW THAT I HAVE CAST ASIDE MY FLESH...
...I HAVE GAINED DEEPER INSIGHT INTO THE WORKINGS OF THIS WORLD!

IN THE STUDY OF THE *ESPIRITU*, THERE IS A CONCEPT CALLED "FOUR LEVELS, TWO POLES, EIGHT STRENGTHS."
...MAKING FOR A TOTAL OF EIGHT FORMS OF *ESPIRITU*.
IN THE GREAT CHAIN OF BEING, THERE ARE FOUR LEVELS OF EVOLUTION, WITH TWO POLES OF YING AND YANG. YING COMPRISES PARCA/DEMON/ EVIL/DARK, AND YANG LOGIC/HOLY/ DRAGON/OGRE.

DIFFERENT STRENGTHS CARRY DIFFERENT LEVELS OF POWER
THAT IS WHY THE SMALLER BLADE OF PARCA BEAT THE DEMON
BUT AGAINST THE FOREIGNER, THE POWERS WERE ON THE SAME LEVEL--YET OPPOSING
...WHICH IS WHY THEY CANCELED EACH OTHER OUT AND THE POWERS WERE NEUTRALIZED.
THIS CREATURE HERE IS A SERVANT OF AN ANCIENT GOD...
IS THAT OF THE "DARK."
BUT AGAINST "DARK"

...THE POWER OF PARCA PREVAILS!
SKRAWW!
GYAAA
GRI
ISHHT
AAAAAA
SKLING

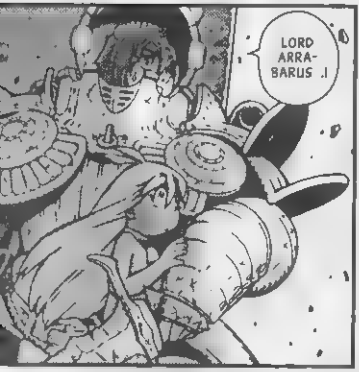
SKZT
SKZT
GRWOO
OOOON!

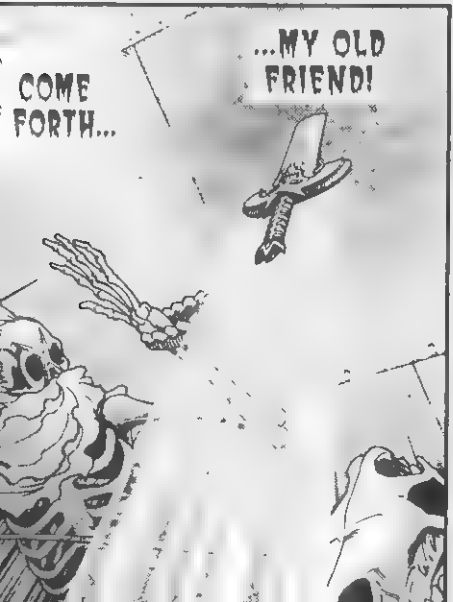
WAAA
AAAH!
HE.
TOOK
OVER
GYGRO...

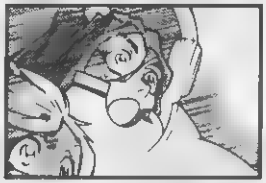
GYA
HAA
HAA!

CALM YOURSELF, GYGRO!
SPUSH
IF YOU DON'T BEHAVE, YOU'LL BE PUNISHED!
FOOLISH BEING .DID YOU REALLY BELIEVE YOU CREATED LIFE FROM NOTHING-NESS?
GLAH!
DON'T YOU REALIZE THIS WAS ALL MY MASTER'S DOING...!?
WAH HA HA HA HA HA! HOW EXTRAVAGANT!
WITH SUCH A DIFFERENCE IN MASS, MY BLADE ALONE CAN'T POSSIBLY DEFEAT HIM!

SCENE THIRTY-ONE: THE GREAT BATTLE





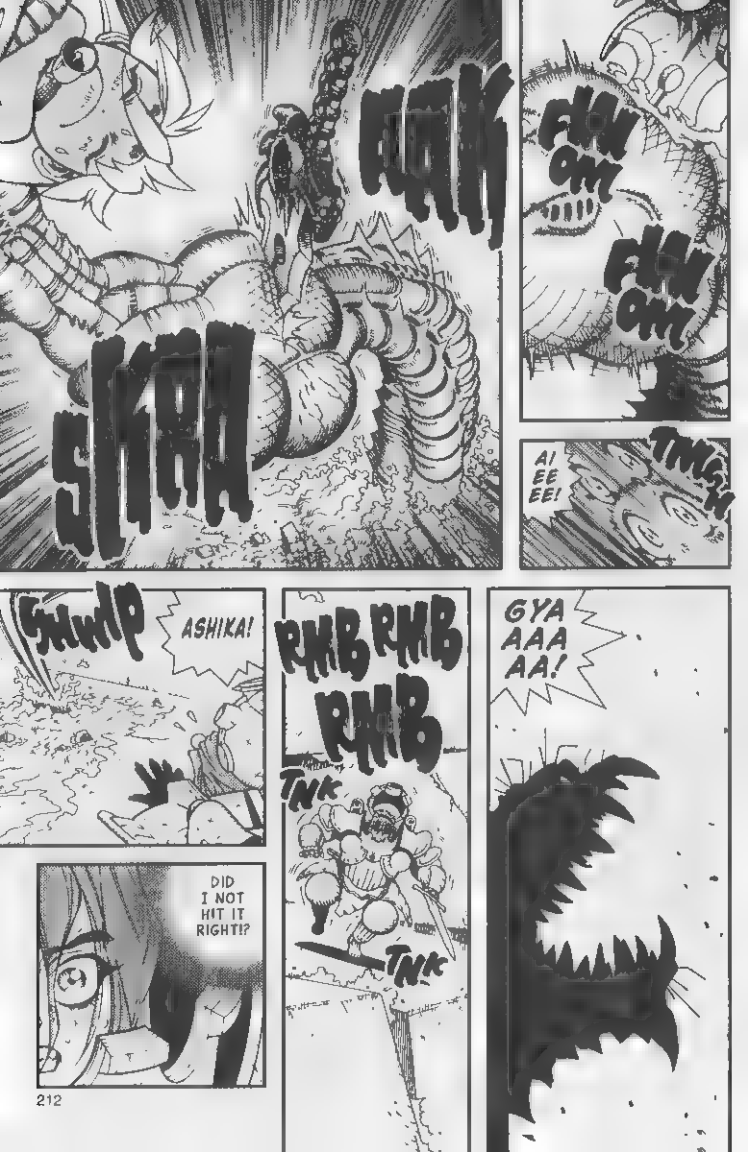


LIFELESS MONSTER THAT THREATENS THE DESTRUCTION OF THIS WORLD...!
NOW YOU FACE *TAGMEC*, THE KNIGHT OF PARCA, AND HIS HUNDRED SOLDIERS OF DEATH!

ENVOY OF FORTUNE, ACT NINE

....
STRANGE..
YOU SEE IT TOO, OLD FRIEND ?
WE'VE SLASHED IT COUNTLESS TIMES, YET IT SHOWS NO SIGN OF WEAKENING!
THIS LIFELESS JUL'AK DARK-NESS...
WE MUST DISCOVER THE WELL-SPRING OF ITS POWER!
ITS WEAK SPOT!
KA BLAM!
THAT'S WHERE WE MUST STRIKE!

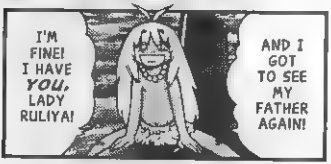
.....
ALCANTARA, RUL'YA, AND THE OTHERS
COULD DO NOTHING BUT STARE HELPLESSLY AT A BATTLE THEY COULD SCARCELY COMPREHEND
SWIP
AI EE EE EE!
!?
LADY RULIYA!
ASHIKA!
HOW COULD I LET MYSELF GET DISTRACTED LIKE THAT!?
SWIP


SHIKA
FLAK
FLAK OM
FLAK OM
A! EE EE!
TMG
SHWIP
ASHIKA!
RMB RMB RMB
TNK
TNK
DID I NOT HIT IT RIGHT!?
GYA AAA AA!

GWA AA--
AA AA--
AA AH!
RMB RMB
AIEEE EEEEE!
IMPRES-SIVE, LADY RULIYA!
HUH?
WELL !
YOU FOUND ITS WEAKNESS SO EASILY!
FASH!

AND SO, EVIL WAS VANQU'SHED... FOR THE TIME BEING.

SCENE THIRTY-TWO: A NEW JOURNEY



LET'S GO, ASHIKA!
AYE!
YOU'RE GOING TO BECOME A GREAT KNIGHT YOURSELF, ONE DAY!

SHARRSH
-KOFF-
ZYOWL! ZYCROW! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT!?
Y-YES...
S-SOME-HOW ..
SHAAAAAA
EEEEK! TH-THIS IS...!
GYGRO !
ME EE ...
IT'S REVERTED TO ITS INFANT STAGE!
DON'T!
BUT IT'S A--
I KNOW.
BUT IT TOO HAS BEEN CAST AWAY BY ITS CREATOR.
IF I DON'T CARE FOR IT, WHO WILL?

I'M CONCERNED ABOUT ZYKEY. GO FIND SOME FRESH WATER!
YES, MASTER!
SHAAAAA
TMP TMSH
NN NH...
ZYKEY, I'M SORRY...
NOT ONLY WAS I USED BY A DEMON...
...BUT I'VE LOST ALL THE THINGS I NEED TO FIND A CURE FOR YOU.
SO MANY LAYERS OF DEFEAT...
YODVA-LIN!...
IS THIS THE REVENGE YOU SPOKE OF...!?
HM !?
IT CAN'T BE!
RR RIP

ZYKEY!
YOUR ARMS ARE BACK!?
UUHH W-WA-WATER
HERE
THANKS
HUH ?
YOU'RE THAT OLD MAN FROM BEFORE!
WE MEET AGAIN, FOREIGN ALCHEMIST.
THIS MUST BE FATE.
WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME ABOUT IT?

SHAAAH
...AND THAT'S THE STORY
"NILNIL DISEASE," YOU CALL IT?
I'VE TRAVELED THESE LANDS FOR MANY A YEAR, BUT I'VE NEVER HEARD TELL OF IT.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN I DON'T HAVE ANY LEADS, THOUGH.
TH-THEN YOU...!?
CALM DOWN.
I DO APPRECIATE YOUR HYPOTHESIS REGARDING THE ROOT CAUSE BEING A LACK OF LIFE ENERGIES
BUT WE MUST ASK, "WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE?"
THE SOURCE OF LIFE
THAT WOULD BE...
WHAT? DON'T YOU KNOW?
IT'S FOOD. FOOD!
CHOMP
EVEN A DOG OR CAT KNOWS THAT!
ARE YOU MOCKING ME?
CALM DOWN.

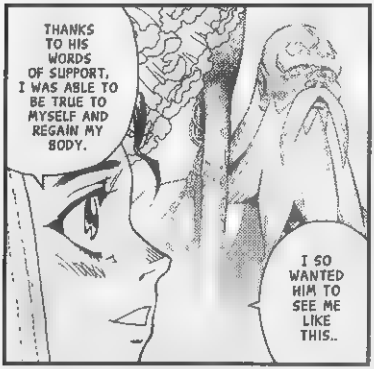
THE TROUBLE-SOME PART OF BEING HUMAN IS THAT MERE LIVING ISN'T ENOUGH.
TIK
THE SOUL NEEDS A LIFE AS WELL. THE SOUL HAS A FOOD SOURCE, TOO
AND WHAT IS FOOD FOR THE SOUL?
"FOOD FOR THE SOUL" ...
THAT'S.. UMM..
WHAT? YOU DON'T KNOW THAT EITHER ?
HMMM?
IT'S STORIES. YOU KNOW-- TALES.
EVEN AN INFANT KNOWS THAT!
FEED IT STORIES, AND THE SOUL GROWS...
...AND THEN NEW STORIES ARE BORN, FEEDING MORE SOULS. MAKING LIFE BETTER.
STORIES ARE LIFE ITSELF!

HOW *LITERARY* ...
BUT YOUR FAIRY TALE DOESN'T APPLY TO *MY* SITUATION ONE BIT!
FOOL! IT'S NOT A *FAIRY TALE!*
THAT GIRL'S ILLNESS IS A *LACK* OF *LIFE!*
THE *HOLE* IN HER *SOUL* HAS MANIFESTED IN HER *BODY!*
SHE'S PROBABLY BEEN KILLING HERSELF SINCE *BIRTH*...
...IN A WORLD WITHOUT HEROES OR JESTERS...
...LIVING A LIFE OF CONSTANT WORRY, AFRAID OF OTHERS' JUDGMENTS...
UNTIL SHE MET SUCH AN UNUSUAL MAN AS *YOU!*
THEREIN LIES HER HOPE!
THE FACT THAT HER ARMS HAVE RETURNED IS PROOF!
SO WHAT'S *MY* PART IN THIS?

HMMM?
SH MM
WHAT!? DON'T YOU KNOW?

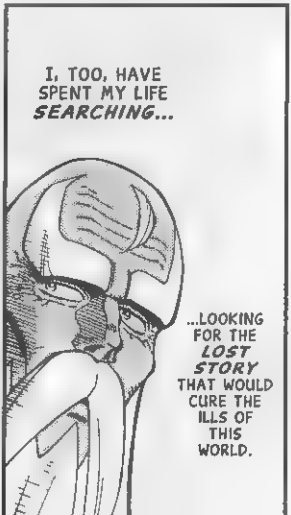
SCENE THIRTY-THREE: ONE YEAR LATER...

YOU LOOK PRETTY, ZYKEY.
THANK YOU, LADY RULIYA.
I'll bet you're jealous, Ruliya!
I AM NOT!
BY THE WAY-- WHERE IS LORD RUDA-KEE?
NOW THAT YOU MENTION IT...


THANKS TO HIS WORDS OF SUPPORT, I WAS ABLE TO BE TRUE TO MYSELF AND REGAIN MY BODY.
I SO WANTED HIM TO SEE ME LIKE THIS..

LORD RUDAKEE IS A LEGENDARY ESPIRITU MASTER...
...THROUGH A STRANGE TWIST OF FATE, HE BROUGHT THESE TWO TOGETHER...

ALCHEMIST FROM A FOREIGN LAND...
...WE TWO ARE *ALIKE.*


I, TOO, HAVE SPENT MY LIFE *SEARCHING...*
...LOOKING FOR THE *LOST STORY* THAT WOULD CURE THE ILLS OF THIS WORLD.

EH?

FAP FAP
WHAT'S THAT ?

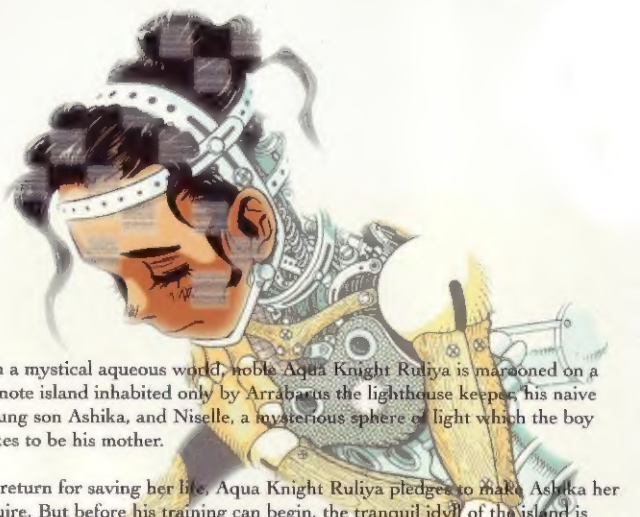
AHEM... ALL RIGHT THEN...
WE NOW BEGIN THE WEDDING CEREMONY OF ALCANTARA AND ZYKEY.
YAAAAH!
GAH!
MASTER AL!
YOU BETTER MAKE MISS ZYKEY HAPPY! 'CAUSE IF YOU DON'T...
HUH?
...I'LL MAKE FECES!
WA HA HA
HAH!
HAVEN'T YOU OUT-GROWN THAT YET ?
IT'S DARK ALL OF A SUDDEN.

YAA AAA AAH!
WH UP
WH UP
WH UP
FWAP
FWAP
WHAT IS THAT !?
A BIRD MON-STER!
MAS-TER!
WE'VE COME TO RESCUE YOU!
GRR WOO OON!
UH...
AA AA AH!
FWSH
MASTER AL!
I'M SORRY, ZYKEY !

ALCANTARA'S SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE ISN'T OVER!
A NEW MYSTERY AWAITS ME!
AAA AAH...
FAP FAP
THEY'RE GONE ? JUST LIKE THAT?

DON'T LET THIS GET YOU DOWN...
CHEER UP, MISS ZYKEY!
THANK YOU...
BUT I HAVEN'T GIVEN UP YET.
YOU HAVE TO FIGHT FOR YOUR HAPPINESS!
MASTER AL!
YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY FROM ME!

FAP FAP
SHWOOM
AI EEE EEE ...
SHE'S A TOUGH ONE...
THE BEST STORY...
...IS TO LIVE YOUR LIFE TO THE FULLEST.
LIVE YOUR STORY...
...MY CHILDREN.
FINIS



On a mystical aqueous world, noble Aqua Knight Ruliya is marooned on a remote island inhabited only by Arrabarus the lighthouse keeper, his naive young son Ashika, and Niselle, a mysterious sphere of light which the boy takes to be his mother.

In return for saving her life, Aqua Knight Ruliya pledges to make Ashika her squire. But before his training can begin, the tranquil idyll of the island is shattered by the arrival of mad genius Alcantara and his minions, Zyrrow and Zykey, who proceed to abduct both hapless Ashika and the precious light sphere!

In this concluding volume, Ashika makes an escape attempt; Ruliya has a final showdown with Alcantara; a mysterious stranger tries to steal the light sphere from its wrongful owner; we learn the bizarre story of Alcantara's life as a young genius in a society ruled by clockwork; and Alcantara finally finds—or is found by—*love!?*

"There's literally no comparison between Yukito Kishiro's complex, dark cyberpunk Battle Angel Alita *and the simple (like an angel) heroic fairytale that's* Aqua Knight. *Except, of course, that both are great in every aspect."*

—Comic Buyer's Guide

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